Whose Values? Policy Design

The tension between the rationalist project and its post-positivist critics is, as previous chapters have highlighted, a consistent theme in policy studies. Yet whereas there is considerable debate over the appropriate role of values in the method and epistemology of policy studies, there is general agreement that public policy itself is value-based. If politics is defined as the authoritative allocation of values, then public policy represents the means of allocating and distributing those values (Easton 1953; A. Schneider and Ingram 1997, 2). But exactly whose values are sanctioned by the coercive powers of the state? This is a central question of policy studies that cuts to the heart of power relationships within society.

Policy design is an umbrella term for the field of policy studies devoted to the systematic examination of the substantive content of policy. From a rationalist perspective, policy is purposive—it is a means to achieve a desired end, a solution to a problem. Policy design scholars readily accept the notion that policy is purposive, but they argue that the substance of policy is much more complex and nuanced than the instrumental assumption of rationalists. Rather than identifying the goal (or problem) and trying to assess what to do or what should be done, policy design

scholars look for the "blueprint" or "architecture" of policy. Policy from this perspective is more than an instrumental means to a desired end; it symbolizes what, and who, society values. Policy design scholars recognize the instrumental dimension of policy but are more focused on identifying and interpreting the symbolic elements. Policy design, and the design process, can shed information on why particular outcomes of interest were or were not achieved, but it is more revealing for what it says about who does, and who does not, have political power, i.e., the ability to have a preferred set of values backed by the coercive powers of the state.

A wholly rationalist view of the policy process suggests that decisions about policy design are made on the basis of comparing potential solutions to defined problems and that policy actors and citizens react to such decisions using similar criteria. The policy design perspective sees such assumptions as naive and incomplete. In the political arena, even the most scientific ("objective") evidence tends to be used subjectively and selectively, championed and accepted when it supports preexisting assumptions about the world and how it works, and rejected when it counters these assumptions (A. Schneider and Ingram 1997). And objective, or at least falsifiable, claims about policy often tend to be secondary considerations even when they do enter the political arena; it is often the symbolic cues stemming from policy that tend to be more appealing than policy facts (Edelman 1990). The decision over policy such as, say, the Patriot Act, tends to be structured not by objective analysis of its expected impact on a particular set of problems but rather by the symbolic and emotional freight of what it means to be a patriot in a time of grave threat to national security.

These symbolic and emotional dimensions are, according to the policy design perspective, highly revealing about the real purposes of public policy, which may be some distance from the putative goals actually expressed by the policy. Indeed, policy design scholars argue that the values embedded in policy design reflect what political struggle is all about. For example, rational actor models of political participation indicate citizens engage in politics to express their policy preferences and, accordingly, will vote out those officials with policy preferences that are different from their own. The field of policy design flips this argument on its head. Values are embedded in policy design, and elected officials and policymakers use these values to secure or maintain political power. Citizens, in turn, tend to be more responsive to value-based arguments than arguments highlighting the costs and benefits of a particular policy program.

The ability of elected officials to use values and symbols to their advantage when crafting public policy has attracted numerous scholars to the study of policy design. Some are interested in explaining political, social, and economic disparities and see the underlying structure of policymaking as contributing to these inequities. Others are interested in trying to bring certain values (egalitarianism, diversity, participation) to the policymaking process. Still others are interested in exploring the conflict between the values they see in mainstream social science methods and theories and the democratic values they believe should be central to public policy. What ties all of this together is a core research question: whose values does public policy promote? This chapter will explore their contributions as well as what values are inherent in policy design and how those values are believed to affect the targets of public policy.

Objective Policy Design?

Policy design refers to the content of public policy. Empirically, the content of public policy includes the following observable characteristics: target population (the citizens who receive the benefits or bear the costs of the policy), the values being distributed by the policy, the rules governing or constraining action, rationales (the justification for policy), and the assumptions that logically tie all these elements together (A. Schneider and Ingram 1997, 2). Though observable, the content of public policy is not viewed objectively by citizens and policymakers, nor is it based on rational considerations. Instead, the process of assembling policy content is based on highly subjective interpretations: interpretations of who justifiably deserves the costs or benefits of a policy, what values should be backed by the coercive powers of the state, and who (or what) should have their freedom of action promoted or constrained to uphold those values. Common to the group of scholars adopting this framework is the notion that value-laden interpretations are inherent in the policy process because language is used as a means for justifying and rationalizing actions or outcomes.

In *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (1990), Murray Edelman made the claim that there is no one way to view policy. Nothing in the political world is objective; all facts are subjective. Edelman's "political spectacle" is suggestive of a political and policy process that is highly subjective and

highly manipulative. Instead of policy design reflecting the needs of society, Edelman presented a political world in which governmental action is not based on a rational response to societal problems. Rather, symbols and language are used in order to perpetuate political status and ideology. As Edelman wrote, language is a means of evoking "favorable interpretations" (1990, 103). What does this mean for the study of policy design? According to Edelman, actions taken by the government are based on alternatives and explanations that promote favorable measures but maintain unresolved problems (18). The construction of the political spectacle is intended to protect immediate interests in an unpredictable world. By defining problems according to self-serving solutions, policymakers preserve the status quo.

Edelman first picked up the theme of the intersubjective nature of policy and politics in his 1964 book *The Symbolic Uses of Politics.* It is here where Edelman first wrote of the deliberate way in which policymakers use symbols and narratives to craft public policy. Since that time, other scholars have also noted the ability of policymakers to manipulate the policy process. Most notable of this research is the work of Frank Fischer. In *Politics, Values, and Public Policy* (1980), Fischer argued that values are embedded in the policy process and policymakers appeal to certain values when designing public policy. Decisions about problem definition, alternative selection, and policy evaluation are based on the deliberate use of values and the subjective interpretation of those values. For Fischer, the process of policy evaluation is best described as one of "political evaluation" (1980, 71). Policymakers construct realities that minimize political costs and maximize political gain.

Edelman and Fischer have painted a very nuanced and chaotic picture of how the content of public policy is assembled, one in which debates between policymakers over who should receive policy benefits are based on subjective, rather than "rational," arguments. This fits well with Frank Fischer and John Forester's (1993) work on the "argumentative" turn in policy analysis. Similar to Edelman's work on the intersubjectivity of public policymaking, Fischer and Forester argued that language shapes reality. Politics is based on arguments over who gets what, when, and how. Fischer and Forester wrote that these arguments spill over to the policy process and affect the way policymakers define a problem and select solutions to problems. Policymakers and analysts use language to craft a reality that fits with their policy design rather than crafting policy design that

fits with reality. Like Edelman, these authors argued that problem defini-
tion is subject to framing and the deliberate use of narratives, symbols,
and stories to shape reality (see also Hajer and Laws 2006).

Put simply, policymakers tend to make "political" rather than rational
or objective evaluations of public policy (Fischer 1980). In other words,
they approach the content of public policy from the value-laden perspec-
tive, from a notion of what the world should look like, and not from a
hard-nosed, objective notion of a societal problem and a systematic
analysis of its potential policy solutions. Like Fischer and Forester,
Charles Anderson (1979) argued that policy evaluation is highly subjec-
tive and highly normative, and that language is the key to understanding
the policy process. Writing at roughly the same time as Fischer, Anderson
argued that "policy analysis has less to do with problem solving than with
the process of argument" (1980, 712). This resonates with Fischer's de-
scription of "political evaluation" as well as Fischer and Forester's (1993)
notion of the argumentative nature of public policy analysis.

For Edelman, Fischer, Forester, and Anderson, the policy process is
clearly not rational. Policy design is an instrumental, cost-benefit exer-
cise, but it is based on the deliberate use of values and symbols to achieve
a particular outcome. In other words, policy outcomes are judged in a rel-
ative context; there is no one objective way to view policy design. This has
serious practical implications in terms of judging whether a policy is ef-
fective. If Edelman is correct, and all reality is constructed, that nothing is
"verifiable or falsifiable" (1990, 111), then how do we know what policies
to maintain and what policies to discard? What do Edelman's, Fischer and
Forester's, and Anderson's arguments mean for policy evaluation? If
policymakers make political or normative instead of rational judgments
about public policy, how do we effectively evaluate public policy? Or,
more simply, how do we know if a policy is "good" or "bad"?

The underlying similarity between all the aforementioned scholars is
their resolve about moving away from strict, empirical analyses of public
policy. Policy analysts should instead embrace theoretical approaches
ranging from post-positivism to critical theory, to deconstructionism, to
hermeneutics. Edelman (1990) offered a prescription for the future that
calls for an "awareness" and understanding of conflicting perspectives in
the decision-making process (130). Such awareness calls for a focus on
what serves an individual's and a community's long-term self-interest, as
well as a need to recognize that reality is constructed through "art,

science, and culture" (Edelman 1990, 130). As Fischer noted, policymakers make political decisions about whether a policy is good or bad. To understand the political nature of such decisions, Fischer argued for a methodology that extends beyond traditional costs/benefit or rational analyses. Instead, policy scholars must employ a "multimethodological" approach (Fischer 1980, 11). Cost-benefit analyses assume policy design can be viewed through a single, objective lens. To accurately study policy design, a methodology that accounts for multiple perspectives is required. For Fischer, the multimethodological approach, an approach that accounts for intersubjectivity and the deliberate use of symbols and language, is the most comprehensive and realistic means for analyzing public policy. Fischer and Forester's (1993) argumentative model rests on similar assumptions. The only way to capture the constructed realities of the policy process is through methodologies that account for intersubjectivity.

Like Edelman and Fischer, Anderson argued that policy evaluation is best understood through an intersubjective or dialectical framework. Whether a policy is judged as good or bad depends on the view of the individual policymaker. Policymakers come from diverse backgrounds, and that training ultimately affects whether a condition in society is viewed as a problem requiring action or a simply a condition. Whereas an economist might describe a particularly policy as successful or efficient, an analyst trained in sociology might view it as inequitable or damaging to the fabric of a community (C. Anderson 1979, 714). To circumvent this dilemma, Anderson advocated for a broader notion of policy rationality similar to that of Fischer. Of this new conception of rationality, Anderson wrote "policy making is understood as a process of reasoned deliberation, argument and criticism rather than pragmatic calculus" (1979, 722). In short, because the policy process is inundated with values, the methodology required to study the policy process must account for such intersubjectivity.

In the title of this chapter we posed the question: "whose values?" For Edelman, Fischer, and others, this is the critical question, both in terms of whose values are being supported or distributed by the policy, and whose values are being used to judge the relative success or worth of the public policy. Values permeate the policy process, and what values are important will vary according to the observer. Reality is constructed by each observer (Edelman 1990, 101). For some, distributing benefits to low-income families may be perceived as perpetuating shoddy lifestyle habits; for oth-

ers, such benefits are seen as a corrective measure for poorly designed institutions. As Edelman (1990) wrote, "reason and rationalization are intertwined" (105). Put another way, "political language is political reality" (Edelman 1990, 104). To sum up, these early policy design scholars were simply pointing out what is most likely obvious to any policymaker—policy design is a messy, political, value-laden process.

The "Paradox" of Policy Design

Edelman, Fischer, and Anderson have provided a basic conceptual platform for studying policy design. The key assumptions of this framework are that policy design is based on intersubjective meanings and the use of symbolic cues, that the content of public policy is designed to fit within policymakers' constructed realities, and that the content of policy will be viewed differently by different groups in society. This framework, as already alluded to in our discussion of policy analysis and evaluation, is not well suited to mainstream rationalist methodologies. Indeed, some scholars such as Deborah Stone (2002) have contended that rational evaluation of policy design and the policy process is simply not possible. For Stone, the "policy paradox" represents the ambiguous nature of the policy process. Nothing in the policy process is clear-cut; all policies present a "double-edged sword" (Stone 2002, 169). Rational, market-based approaches to policymaking are insufficient and inaccurate because they treat the policymaking process like an "assembly line" (Stone 2002, 10).

   Discounting the rational decision-making model as too narrow, Stone argued that policy decision making is more accurately represented by a model based on political reason. Stone's framework is based on two premises: 1) that economic frameworks rooted in rational choice theory (the foundation for analysis and evaluation methods such as cost-benefit analysis) are inadequate for evaluating public policy; and 2) that society should be viewed through the lens of a "polis" and not the market. For Stone, policymaking is defined as "the struggle over ideas" (2002, 11). The policy process is characterized by a combination of rational decision making based on scientific calculations and political goals derived from social interaction and "community life" (Stone 2002, 10). The polis, or political community, allows for both perspectives when evaluating public

policy. In this regard, Stone's argument is similar to the work of Edelman and Fischer. Policy design must be viewed through multiple perspectives; there is no one rational or objective way to evaluate public policy.

For Stone, the policy process is irrational at both the agenda-setting and decision-making stages. As other scholars have noted, how a problem is defined affects whether the policy receives a favorable reaction from elected officials and citizens (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Kingdon 1995). For Stone and Fischer, the use of symbols, images, and narratives most strongly affects the problem-definition stage of the policy process. Indeed, Stone (2002, 133) wrote that problem definition is "the strategic representation of situations." When a policymaker uses the image of a "welfare queen" to talk about equity in distributing welfare benefits, she is clearly pushing for more stringent welfare benefits. However, when a policymaker uses images of families with young children in homeless shelters, she is trying to shift the debate from one based on the in-equitable distribution of benefits to one based on compassion and fair-ness. At the decision-making stage, the policy process is not rational because alternatives are not considered equally. Policymakers tend to use political language and ambiguous goals that do not allow for rational cost-benefit comparisons. Policy problems tend to be written as narra-tives, with numbers being used selectively to support the storyline. For example, Stone wrote of the use of metaphors, such as the "war on poverty" or the "war on drugs," as political tools deliberately designed to elicit support for certain policies (2002, 154). Similarly, Stone noted how policymakers often use a synecdoche such as the "welfare queen" to push for tougher restrictions on the distribution of welfare benefits (2002, 146).[1]

Stone's argument extends to policymakers as well as targets of public policy. To determine whether a policy will be effective, Stone argued that policy analysts must understand the target's view point. As Stone noted, contrary to predictions of the rational actor model, behavior does not al-ways change based on monetary costs and benefits. Rewards and sanc-tions tend to have different meanings for different populations, and such populations tend to act strategically. As an example, Stone wrote of how the Clinton administration incorrectly assumed welfare recipients would work more if the penalty for working while receiving benefits was re-duced. Instead, Stone argued it is more likely that such recipients worked as a means of having enough money to put food on the table. Thus, de-creasing the penalty for working while receiving benefits would be an in-

effective policy because most welfare recipients work in response to their daily needs rather than existing welfare provisions (Stone 2002, 279).

The paradox of Stone's *Policy Paradox* is that whereas public policy is often justified as adhering to one of five democratic values (equity, efficiency, security, liberty, community), in reality there is widespread disagreement over what is equitable, what is efficient, what is secure, what liberates, and what constitutes community. A rational evaluation of public policy implies a common understanding of these democratic goals. As Stone wrote, such a view is shortsighted and naive. Instead, disagreements arise between citizens, between policymakers, and between citizens and policymakers over the definition of these values.

As an example of the problem of achieving the goal of efficiency, Stone asked the reader to consider the efficiency of a public library (2002, 62–65). How should policymakers (librarians) spend savings resulting from the re-staffing of the library? To achieve efficiency there must be an agreement on the goals of the organization. Should the library increase the number of books? If so, what type of books? Should the library seek to reduce the amount of time necessary to locate materials? Should the library focus on the goals as perceived by library staff or the goals as perceived by citizens? As with the values of equity, liberty, and security, efficiency requires an agreement on the goal of the organization. Within the public sector, rarely is there widespread agreement on such goals. Think about any federal agency. What should be the goal of that agency? Is there likely to be agreement on that goal among staffers of the agency? Among policymakers? Among citizens? Moreover, as Stone stated, efficiency requires complete information, a state that is rarely achieved in the polis. Thus, the paradox of using these goals as justification for policy design is that citizens and policymakers are most likely to disagree on how best to achieve these goals. People want these democratic values to guide the policy process; they are simply unable to agree on how they should be reflected in policy design.

What (or whose) values should guide the policy design process? Stone argued that attempts by policy scholars to quantify and create a more scientific approach to policy analysis potentially abrogate democratic values. Equity, efficiency, security, liberty, and community are actually goals and should "serve as the standards we use to evaluate existing situations and policy proposals" (Stone 2002, 12). However, citizens and policymakers have different perspectives on what an equitable or efficient policy

looks like. Efficiency is usually defined as inputs over outputs. But for most public organizations, there is disagreement over desired output, and this is exactly Stone's argument. What output should be the focus of the public library in the above example? Expediency of the citizen in finding a particular book, video, magazine, or newspaper? Quality of book collection? Because of this disagreement, the likelihood of achieving consensus regarding efficiency is small. There will always be disagreement as to what constitutes a good outcome. [2]

The problems with efficiency are also seen with the democratic values of equity, security, and liberty. In her discussion on equity, Stone used the example of school board elections to demonstrate the difficulty of designing policy that allows for equitable participation by all interested actors. The most equitable policy regarding school board elections would be to allow all citizens to vote. But others may disagree by arguing that only those affected by the decision should be allowed to vote. Still others may argue that only those citizens with school-age children can vote (Stone 2002, 43). Again, while most people agree on the need for equity in policy decision making for public organizations, what constitutes equity is an open question. As Stone wrote, "every policy involves the distribution of something" (2002, 53). Welfare policy, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and student financial aid are all policies designed to distribute resources to particular groups. The question arises as to what is the most appropriate (i.e., equitable) way of distributing such resources. Stone summed up this point nicely when she wrote:

> Equality may in fact mean inequality; equal treatment may require unequal treatment; and the same distribution may be seen as equal or unequal, depending on one's point of view. (2002, 42)

The contribution of Stone is that she has raised awareness of the competing perspectives over seemingly agreeable goals. The market model, according to Stone, indicates a zero-sum relationship between equity and efficiency. To efficiently distribute welfare benefits means that not all of those who qualify for such benefits will receive them. Stone rejected this model in favor of the polis model, which states that policymakers use symbols when designing policy to perpetuate existing stereotypes. According to Stone, the democratic values of equity, efficiency, security, liberty, and community not only guide policy design but also serve as goals

and benchmarks. Policymakers and citizens want the content of public policy to reflect democratic values, but agreement on whether such values are reflected in policy content is rare. Other scholars have also picked up on Stone's paradox. H. George Frederickson (2007) wrote that "results-driven management" approaches are naive because they ignore the very problem identified by Stone. As Frederickson wrote,

> public administrators catch criminals, put out fires and even try to prevent them, teach children, supply pure water, fight battles, distribute social security checks, and carry out a thousand other activities—all outputs. (2007, 11)

Applying the value of efficiency, however, how do we analyze such outputs? For a local fire department, should efficiency be defined by response time to fires, the number of fires put out per month, or the number of complaints by local citizens? These choices are important because they can determine whether a policy is judged as efficient or not, and more generally whether the policy is judged as good or bad. Frederickson also applied this notion to breast cancer research by medical research organizations. Should such organizations be held accountable according to "the percentage of women of a certain age receiving mammograms or the percentage of women of a certain age with breast cancer" (2007, 11)? In this case the organization must choose between "agency outputs" and "social outcomes" (Frederickson 2007, 11). Although Frederickson focused on the problem of achieving consensus on accountability, the problem could just as easily be applied to the concept of efficiency. The point is that attaching too much weight to specific measures of policy output overlooks the diversity of outputs produced by public organizations and the different values citizens and policymakers attach to such outputs.

At the heart of Stone's argument is the notion that public policy should be accountable to a diverse of set of interests. However, as Frederickson's argument suggests, the value of accountability suffers from the same problems as those of equity, efficiency, security, and liberty. In January 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act as a means of increasing the accountability of K–12 education. Since that time, administrators and parents have clashed over how accountability should be defined. For some, any measurable improvement is a sign of success; for others, test scores are the only appropriate measure. Making the problem even more difficult is the fact that schools tend to face what

economists label "economies of scope." A school that focuses its resources on increasing graduation rates may see a subsequent decrease in test scores as marginal students are kept in school. Similarly, schools interested in increasing test scores may see a rise in truancy rates as marginal students are not encouraged to stay in school, particularly on test days (see Wenger 2000; Smith and Larimer 2004). Although policymakers, school administrators, and parents agree on the need to increase school efficiency and effectiveness, all three groups tend to define such values differently.

Scholars from other subfields have also recognized the dilemma in attempting to implement objective means for evaluating public policy. Going back to the work of Woodrow Wilson, public administration scholars have long argued that the dichotomy between politics and administration is a false one. Instead, administration is infused with political battles. As many public administration scholars have noted, this creates problems when attempting to evaluate the efficiency of public policies. An exchange in *Public Administration Review*, the leading journal in public administration, highlighted Stone's interdisciplinary contribution.

Scholars were invited to contribute on the topic of "Looking at the Efficiency Concept in Our Time." In this exchange, Schachter (2007) argued for a more democratic form of efficiency:

> In a democracy, efficient administration requires a polity with a democratic underpinning so elected officials and administrators get a sense of the outcomes communities want. (807)

In other words, citizens should be involved in the policymaking process. Like Stone, Schachter was making a normative argument about what values should guide the policy process. In order for policy design to reflect the preferences of citizens, they must be involved in the policy process. Implicit in Schachter's argument are Edelman's and Stone's claims that policy design is subject to interpretation. There is no one objective way to define efficiency for a particular policy. Instead, policymakers need to recognize that citizens value processes and outcomes differently. Reacting to Schachter's argument, Bohte (2007) agreed that citizens and policymakers are likely to disagree over the importance of policy outcomes. In fact, Bohte wrote that disagreement is "probably the rule rather than the exception" (2007, 812).

Because there is no one agreed-upon definition of efficiency or equity, policymakers are free to use symbols and to craft language in such a way as to create certain policy images. These policy images then serve as representations of the policy generally. What values guide the policy process? For Edelman, Fischer, and Stone, the answer to this question is "it depends." Whether a policy is judged as good or bad or is considered a success or failure is ultimately a value choice. Normative or value judgments, in addition to rational judgments, influence public policy decisions. Although efficiency arguments tend to guide policy analysis, Stone made a strong case that what constitutes efficiency, as well as other democratic values, is also a value choice.

Social Constructions and Target Populations

To understand and analyze the policy process requires an understanding of the way in which policymakers create and use measures for policy evaluation. How we characterize groups of individuals is based on multiple perspectives of the problem, as well as symbolism and the strategic framing of interests. Peter May (1991) wrote of such a strategy when distinguishing between "policies with publics" and "policies without publics." Policies with publics, i.e., policies with established constituencies, face a different set of design constraints than policies without publics. Whereas policies without publics do not have to adhere to the expectations of interested advocacy groups, such policies must also avoid inciting conflict that gets the attention of previously uninterested groups. The point is that policy design does not operate independently of politics. The process of policy design requires an acute awareness of how the public and the political world will respond to policy proposals.

As we have indicated, Stone's primary argument countered the "unambiguous" model of rational decision making; essentially, nothing is "value-free." What to include or exclude from the policy process is based on individual interpretation and contrasting worldviews. Although Stone did not completely discount rational decision making, she argued that the political community has a profound impact on the policy process. Key to Stone's argument is the notion that policy design is based on the politics of categorization: "what needs are legitimate" (2002, 98) and

"how we do and should categorize in a world where categories are not given" (2002, 380).

Anne L. Schneider and Helen Ingram (1997) picked up on Stone's (1988) original notion of the politics of categorization. However, unlike scholars in the previous two sections who primarily focused on values of policymakers, Schneider and Ingram focused both on the deliberate use of values by policymakers as well as how such values are translated and interpreted by citizens. We turn first to their discussion of the actions of policymakers.

Schneider and Ingram began by arguing that only by evaluating policy content and substance is it possible to discern how and why policies are constructed. Using "policy design" as the dependent variable and "social construction" as the independent variable, the authors characterized the policymaking process as "degenerative" (1997, 11). Policies are designed by public officials to reinforce social constructions of various groups in society, described as "target populations." In addition, science is often used to further stigmatize these groups as "deserving" or "undeserving." As the authors noted, science is exploited as a means for justifying policy, not verifying specifics as the most appropriate means available as would be expected in the rational actor model. Science is used only when it is convergent with favorable policy options (A. Schneider and Ingram 1997, 12).

Policy designs are constructed and interpreted according to favorable meanings based on societal perspectives of target populations. Schneider and Ingram divided target populations into four main groups based on political power and perceived social constructions of deserving and undeserving groups. The four groups are advantaged, contenders, dependents, and deviants (1997, 109). Advantaged groups include scientists, business owners, senior citizens, and the military. Contenders, like advantaged groups, have a lot of political power but are perceived as less deserving than advantaged groups. Examples include labor unions, gun owners, and CEOs. Dependents are those groups that lack political power but are positively socially constructed (i.e., mothers, children, the poor, the mentally handicapped). For example, whereas individuals with disabilities seeking public education would fall under the heading of "dependents," distributive policies to this group have lacked sufficient resources because special education advocates are "weakly represented," thus yielding little political opportunities (A. Schneider and Ingram

1997, 126). Finally, deviants lack both political power and a positive social construction; thus they are perceived as politically weak and undeserving. Welfare mothers, criminals, terrorists, gangs, and the homeless tend to fall within this classification (examples are from A. Schneider and Ingram 1997, 109; Ingram, A. Schneider, and P. deLeon 2007, 102).

Importantly, these four categories are fluid and subject to change. Ingram, Schneider, and deLeon (2007) later distinguished between big business and small business, with the former being classified as contenders and the latter as advantaged. Advocacy groups tend to be the most fluid. For example, environmentalists in Schneider and Ingram's early classification are classified as having moderate political power and perceived as deserving, resulting in a classification somewhere between contenders and deviants. Later revisions by Ingram, Schneider, and deLeon (2007) placed environmentalists clearly in the contender grouping. Even within categories, groups can affect how other groups are socially constructed. Tracing the history of the social construction of welfare recipients, Sanford Schram (2005) wrote that because welfare was constructed in such a way as being synonymous with African Americans, the social construction of African Americans suffered. This had significant repercussions because African Americans suffered in terms of political power. Because welfare recipients were categorized as dependents, African Americans were initially socially constructed as a dependent population.

According to Schneider and Ingram, public officials purposefully construct policy designs based on a "burden/benefit" analysis of political opportunities and risks of the four categories of target populations (1997, 114). Advantaged groups tend to be targets for distributive policies that allocate benefits with little or no costs. Because advantaged groups are high in political power, policymakers benefit by minimizing policy costs and maximizing policy benefits to such groups. Contenders' groups also tend to receive policy benefits, but these benefits are not as explicit as for advantaged groups. Contenders tend to be perceived as "selfish, untrustworthy, and morally suspect" (Ingram, Schneider, and deLeon 2007, 102) and thus less deserving than advantaged groups. As a result, policy burdens tend to be more publicized than policy benefits. Indeed, as Ingram, Schneider, and deLeon wrote (2007), "benefits to contenders are hidden because no legislators want to openly do good things for shady people" (102).

Both advantaged groups and contenders tend to have a high degree of political power; the only difference is that the former are perceived as

deserving whereas the latter are perceived as undeserving. Unlike these two groups, the other two groups in Schneider and Ingram's framework lack political power. Dependent groups such as the poor or handicapped are those groups that lack political power but are socially constructed as deserving. Although benefits distributed to dependent groups tend to be more explicit than those distributed to contenders, dependents' lack of political power prevents such groups from receiving maximum policy benefits. The problems of dependent groups are perceived as the result of individual failings rather than social problems. Doling out benefits to the poor or people on welfare is politically risky because such benefits are perceived as addressing individual problems at the expense of the public good. Dependent groups also tend to be the first to see their benefits cut in times of fiscal crisis (Schneider and Ingram 1993, 345; Ingram, Schneider, and deLeon 2007, 103). Finally, deviants, as would be expected, receive few if any policy benefits. Instead, policymakers tend to be more interested in ensuring "burdens" are distributed to such groups. Deviants "deserve to punished," and any policies that deviate from such expectations are likely to lead to negative consequences for the policymaker (Schneider and Ingram 1997, 130).

Schneider and Ingram's research is unique for the two-stage research process it employs. In the first stage, the researchers treat policy design as the dependent variable and social constructions as the key independent variable. As we have discussed, how groups are socially constructed (deserving or undeserving) ultimately affects policy design (the distribution of policy benefits and burdens). The second stage of Schneider and Ingram's work is to treat policy design as the independent variable and test for any effects on perceptions of citizenship and democratic efficacy. The authors posited that individuals placed in politically powerless groups (dependents and deviants) have a negative view of the political system, resulting in political apathy and low levels of political participation. Target populations learn their position in society as deserving or undeserving (Schneider and Ingram 1997, 103), and this has real implications for attitudes toward government.

Joe Soss (2005) provided a direct test of the second stage of Schneider and Ingram's framework. To conduct his research, Soss drew on interviews with recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Because AFDC recipients depend on caseworkers for benefits, Soss argued that these individuals lack a sense of self-worth, resulting in

negative or apathetic views about the political system. Soss found that re-
cipients tend to sense that they have been categorized as members of a
negative or "stigmatized" group (2005, 316). As a result, these recipients
tend to be less likely to participate in government and are less likely to
view such participation as meaningful. Earlier work by Soss (1999) also
found that perceptions regarding policy designs directly influence per-
ceptions of political efficacy. As Soss wrote, "policy designs teach lessons
about citizenship status and government" (1999, 376).

By distributing costs and benefits to target populations according to
whether they are perceived as deserving or undeserving, elites reinforce
power relationships. In turn, this shapes political participation as the tar-
gets of specific policies develop positive or negative attitudes toward gov-
ernment and the ability to effectively influence governmental activity.
Take a real-life example from a college community: following a home-
coming football game, several hundred college students rioted in
the streets, burning cars and causing significant property damage. In the
years following that event, the local police department rightly placed riot
barricades along the street where the most rioting occurred. This first
riot, however, proved to be the exception rather than the rule. Nonethe-
less, in the ten years since that initial and singular event, the police of the
local community have placed riot police on the streets during homecom-
ing weekend in anticipation of a violent demonstration by college stu-
dents. Adopting the first phase of Schneider and Ingram's framework, the
image conveyed to those citizens is that they are deviant and uncivil citi-
zens. The target population is college students, and this group is socially
constructed as a deviant and undeserving population. The second phase
of Schneider and Ingram's framework would suggest that these students
are likely to have, on average, more negative attitudes toward govern-
ment and, on average, perceive government as less likely to respond to
their interests.

The work by Soss, as well as early work by Schneider and Ingram,
clearly implicates the connection between the study of policy design and
the study of democratic citizenship and whether the actions of govern-
ment fulfill democratic values. Ingram and Schneider (2005b, 6) later ar-
gued that the "degenerative" nature of public policy is worsened by the
path-dependent nature of social constructions. Social constructions be-
come embedded in society, rarely questioned and rarely subject to
change. Implicit in this reasoning is the notion that any policy proposals

that match existing social constructions will be passed unanimously by a legislative body. But can social constructions change? Can the targets of public policies expand or contract?

According to Peter May, the answer is yes. Social constructions are not static; instead, policymakers adjust beliefs about policy problems in response to incoming stimuli, evidence of what May (1992, 332) described as "social learning." Social learning is different from instrumental learning. Although both entail forms of what May has described as "policy learning," instrumental learning is more reflective of the rationalist approach to policy analysis, emphasizing the means for solving policy problems and learning through policy evaluation. Social learning is more goal-oriented, focusing on the cause of the problem and beliefs about target populations. May has cited evidence of social policy learning as cases in which the targets of policy proposals change or beliefs about the goals of the policy change (1992, 351). Policy learning is considerably more likely for "policies with publics" (May 1991) because such policies allow for a give and take and an updating of beliefs about established groups.

Learning, however, is not limited to policy content. Unlike policy learning, "political learning" concerns the ability of policy elites to craft politically feasible policy proposals. Political learning and policy learning are distinct but interrelated concepts; with a change in beliefs about the goals of a policy, policy elites may adopt new strategies for pushing a particular policy. Although May has admitted that evidence of policy and political learning is difficult to systematically and empirically assess, his model provides a theoretical basis as to how target populations are socially constructed and also that such social constructions are subject to change.

Nicholson-Crotty and Meier (2005) picked up on this issue. Whereas Nicholson-Crotty and Meier agreed that policymakers deliberately use social constructions to craft public policy, they contended that the process is more complex than suggested by Ingram and Schneider. At issue is the notion that policy proposals designed to burden deviant groups will have little or no resistance in becoming in public policy. Nicholson-Crotty and Meier instead have argued that three conditions must be met before this transition takes place. First, the group must be perceived as "marginal" by those who hold political power. Second, there must a "moral entrepreneur" who actively seeks to link the actions of the group to larger societal problems. This individual must possess political power or be a well-respected expert. Nicholson-Crotty and Meier discussed the

role of James Q. Wilson as a moral entrepreneur in assisting the passage of crime legislation in 1984. Wilson, because of his role as a well-respected academic, was able to shape the discussion in such a way that linked criminal behavior with the decline of community values (Nicholson-Crotty and Meier 2005, 237). Finally, the third component is the "political entrepreneur." This individual is similar to Kingdon's (1995) policy entre-preneur in that this person attempts to convince other policymakers that the proposal represents sound public policy. In short, policymakers use social constructions to design public policy, but the link is more nuanced than originally argued by Schneider and Ingram.

Despite the preconditions outlined by Nicholson-Crotty and Meier (2005), most policy design scholars agree on the intersubjective nature of policy design as well as the potential for degenerative politics. Edelman, Fischer, and Stone have all argued that values have infused the policy process; that policy decisions are based on the deliberate use of symbols, narratives, and stories; and that the study of public process requires post-positivist methodology, which accounts for intersubjectivity and con-structed realities. Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram took this a step further by asking whether such intersubjectivity is deleterious to democ-racy. As should be apparent by our discussion, they found strong evi-dence that socially constructed realities do in fact create unequal groups. Some groups are targeted for policy benefits whereas others are targeted for policy burdens. These decisions are not based on rational cost-benefit analyses but instead on socially constructed realities. Although "policy learning" does occur (May 1992), so too does political learning, thus there is no guarantee that policymakers will make decisions on the basis of what is good public policy. And even though it may be more practical and logical to design policy that redistributes benefits to groups that are rationally justified as suffering from societal problems, political risks often dissuade rational officials from pursuing such action (Schneider and In-gram 1997, 115). The lack of democratic values and the subsequent lack of interest in politics also have real practical implications for democracy.

"Democratic" Values and Policy Design

In liberal democracies, the normative underpinning of public policy should be democratic values. As a normative claim, this is a supportable

argument. But how do we test it? Do public policies reflect indeed demo-
cratic ideals? Stone's (2002) work has questioned whether there can ever
be agreement on what constitutes such democratic values as equity or lib-
erty. Schneider and Ingram have also stressed that the values inherent in
policy symbols are inherently undemocratic. Unique to all of these schol-
ars is an explicit call for a more democratic policymaking process; from
problem definition to policy design, democratic values should be inher-
ent in the policy process. So, if democratic values should guide the policy
process, but clearly do not, how do we correct this?

As we discussed earlier in the chapter, many scholars agree that quanti-
tative approaches to the study of public policy such as cost-benefits
analyses ignore the intersubjectivity guiding the policy process (see Fis-
cher 1980; Edelman 1990). Up to this point, we have emphasized the
theoretical solutions to this dilemma, most notably post-positivist
methodology such as constructionism and hermeneutics. For Peter
deLeon, however, this intersubjectivity and deliberate use of value and
symbols has resulted in growing separation between government and its
citizens, requiring a more practical response.

Drawing on Harold Lasswell's notion of the "policy sciences of democ-
racy," deLeon (1995, 1997) argued that the policymaking process has
shifted away from core democratic values. For deLeon, the move toward a
more positivist approach to the study of public policy resulted in a shift
away from Lasswell's policy science of democracy. Ultimately, deLeon saw
the policy sciences as captured by two dominant approaches, utilitarian-
ism and liberal-rationalism, both of which have increased the distance
between citizens and their government. Utilitarianism, because it advo-
cates a strong role for the market and relies heavily on data, ignores "hu-
man factors" (P. deLeon 1997, 53). The utilitarian approach ignores the
wishes of ordinary citizens and ignores how citizens interpret policy mes-
sages sent by governing elites. As deLeon (1997) wrote, this leads to policy
research that is "methodologically rich and results poor" (55). The solu-
tion? According to deLeon, a more involved citizenry. As deLeon has writ-
ten, "individual values are just as open to analysis as are the relative 'facts,'
and must similarly be open to public discourse" (P. deLeon 1997, 79).

On a theoretical level, deLeon called for post-positivist methodology,
particularly the use of deconstructionism and hermeneutics to more ap-
propriately link the policy sciences with democratic values. DeLeon, how-
ever, also offered a practical solution for more democratic policy design.

For deLeon, the current state of policy research is detrimental to democracy. The lack of democratic values creates an apathetic public, and, as deLeon (1997) wrote, democracy cannot "cope with the contemporary civic malaise and political frustration" (100). DeLeon's main concern was that policy science has become disconnected from its primary "clientele, the citizenry" (1997, 98). To correct this, the study of public policy must be characterized by open discourse between citizens and policymakers. The solution: participatory policy analysis (PPA). PPA refers to the notion of directly engaging citizens in public policymaking. DeLeon has cited numerous examples in which citizen panels have been constructed to assist in policy design and in which the result has been a more satisfied citizenry. The underlying assumption of PPA is that citizens want more involvement in the policymaking process and that such involvement will ameliorate growing disenchantment with government institutions and government elite.

For policy design scholars such as Schneider and Ingram (1997) and Soss (1999, 2006) apathy breeds disinterest and the desire to withdraw from political life, further perpetuating a cycle of undemocratic policymaking. Participatory policy analysis moves the citizen from a passive, reactionary role in the policy process to an active, decision-making role. Paraphrasing John Dewey, deLeon wrote: "The cure for the ailments of democracy is more civic participation" (1997, 43). More citizen participation in the policy process increases citizen satisfaction with the political process *and* creates better public policy.[3] Only through citizen engagement will the policy sciences truly reflect democratic values. DeLeon's (1997) call for PPA has fueled research examining the effects of citizen participation on improving policy responsiveness and overall citizen satisfaction with the policymaking process (see also Fung and Wright 2003*a*; Macedo 2005). Even public administration scholars have advocated for a more citizen-oriented approach to policy design. For example, Schachter (2007) has argued that the only way for an organization to agree on efficiency is through input from stakeholders. Although Schachter does not cite deLeon, her policy prescriptions are certainly in line with those of deLeon.

The manner in which target populations identify with and engage in society speaks volumes about the state of democracy. In their seminal work, *Policy Design for Democracy*, Schneider and Ingram concluded that the social construction of target populations challenges pluralist ideals,

threatening to further the crisis of democracy (1997, 198). Policy designs are based on the construction and maintenance of power through target populations. Policy design determines the social construction of target populations, and, in turn, affects how those target populations view their role in society. Designs that favor the status quo are favorable because they represent political opportunity. As a result, certain groups have maintained relatively permanent status as positive target populations, with a significant amount of political power.

Refining their earlier work, Ingram and Schneider (2006) later called for a more explicit and active role for citizens. Like Peter deLeon, Ingram and Schneider (2006) view the study of public policy as a normative exercise: "The public must become more directly involved in holding government structures accountable" (Ingram and Schneider 2006, 182). Ingram and Schneider have explicitly argued that policy design should serve democracy and policy analysts should "design policy that will better serve democracy" (2006, 172). Not only should policy design serve democracy, but, according to Ingram and Schneider, "citizens ought to view their role as citizens as important" (2006, 172). For deLeon, Ingram, and Schneider, policy design shapes the connection between citizens and government. Thus, the primary means for improving policy design and increasing citizen satisfaction with government is through citizen engagement in the policy process. Similar to deLeon's PPA approach, Ingram and Schneider (2006 have contended that when citizens are given a voice in the policy process, they will "be encouraged through this policy change to engage in discourse" (176).

The policy process rarely fits with the market model of economics in which goals are clearly defined and alternatives considered comprehensively in an objective costs-and-benefits manner. Instead, it is a battle over what values should guide the policy process. Schneider and Ingram have made a strong case that democratic values should be involved in policy design. However, in their view, policy design tends to be based on constructed realities that benefit advantaged groups. The result is undemocratic policy design and a self-perpetuating system of "degenerative politics." Not only are values and symbols present in the policy process, they are used deliberately by policymakers. For Schneider and Ingram, the current state of policy design is both undemocratic and non-pluralist. Policy designs impart messages to target populations of their status and how others think of them, and current policy designs teach powerless

groups (dependents and deviants) that mobilization and participation are useless. As Ingram, Schneider, and deLeon stated, "Messages convey who belongs, whose interests are important, what kind of 'game' politics is, and whether one has a place at the table" (2007, 100). For deLeon, the only way to change such messages is through a more policy active citizenry. When citizens participate in the policymaking process, their sense of efficacy and trust in government increases, making the policy process more democratic as well as improving the overall quality of policy design.

Testing Policy Design Theories?

In one sense, the claims that emerge from the field of policy design draw universal agreement. Most policy scholars agree with Edelman, Fischer, and Stone that policymakers make deliberate and selective use of facts, stories, and images to support particular policies. Most policy scholars agree with Schneider and Ingram that policymakers distribute policy burdens and benefits in such a way as to maximize political gain. Political scientists have long noted that elected officials are driven primarily by the desire for reelection (see Mayhew 1974). So it is no surprise that elites will attempt to embed certain values within policy designs that reinforce existing perceptions and avoid negative repercussions. Yet for positivist social scientists, the frameworks discussed throughout this chapter are viewed with skepticism—the concepts too amorphous to systematically guide research and the methods lacking the empirical rigor associated with the rationalist project.

Testing the policy design theories discussed in this chapter, like the theories themselves, is a messy process. To be considered a legitimate a subfield, policy design needs to offer some predictability to the policy process. Thus far we have broken the field down into three stages: the values scholars (Edelman, Fischer and Forester, C. Anderson), the politics-of-categorization scholars (Stone, Schneider, and Ingram), and the participatory scholars (deLeon, Schneider, and Ingram). All three sets of scholars agree on the need for diverse methodology when studying policy design, but to be considered a legitimate subfield (i.e., one that generates testable hypotheses), many questions still need to be answered.

As has been discussed, early policy design scholars argued that policymakers craft stories to fit with existing policies. Can we predict what values,

stories, narratives, and images will resonate with citizens? Are post-positivist methods such as constructionism or hermeneutics more appropriate for certain stages of the policy process? Schneider and Ingram have argued that social constructions and policy design reduce democratic participation. Perhaps, but by how much? What type of participation? Soss (2005) has provided a solid first cut at these questions using survey research, but questions still remain. How much variation in participation levels is there between deviants and dependents, between contenders and advantaged groups? What causes a group to change from a deviant to dependent? Can a group ever move from dependent to contender to advantaged, and vice versa? From Kingdon (1995) we know that focusing events significantly shape how we view societal problems. Does this hold for the classification of target groups? Why do some social constructions fade over time? What constitutes evidence of "social learning" or "political learning"? A central problem for the policy design project is that its conceptual frameworks do not generate clean, empirically testable hypotheses; ultimately its empirical claims are not particularly empirical. This is not wholly surprising given its emphasis on the subjective nature of reality, but it provides no clear basis for sorting out which claims or perspectives are the best basis for judging policy. The rationalist project, for all of its shortcomings, offers a steady platform for generating comparative judgments of public policy and has a central notion of the value to guide such judgments: efficiency. Policy design has no equivalent internal conceptual gyroscope.

Consider deLeon, Schneider, and Ingram's call for PPA. Does this not fly directly in the face of Stone's argument about the difficulties of ensuring equity? Who participates? How much participation? At what stage of the policy process? About what decisions? The assumption underlying this solution is that citizens, if given the chance, want to be involved in policymaking. However, research on public attitudes toward government suggest otherwise. Drawing from extensive survey and focus group research, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (1995, 2002) found that in fact most citizens do *not* want to be involved in the policy process. What they want is the comfort in knowing that policymakers are looking out for their best interests. As Hibbing and Theiss-Morse found, most citizens are not comforted by what they see in the policy process. As a result, they feel forced to pay attention to politics, not out of a desire to participate but out of a desire to keep policymakers in check. Joining groups is not the answer to

increased satisfaction with government because homogenous groups tend to reinforce the perception of a commonality of interest where one does not exist (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2005). Thus, whereas deLeon has argued that increased levels of citizen participation will improve satisfaction with government, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse argued that rarely do citizens want to participate, only when they feel it is necessary to prevent self-interested behavior on the part of elites. Even Deborah Stone (2002) would most likely take issue with deLeon's recommendation for more citizen involvement. As her discussion of ensuring equity in school board elections demonstrates, even when most parties are in agreement on the need to be inclusive, conflict arises over what constitutes equitable public participation. On a more practical level, Bohte (2007, 813) cautioned against too much citizen involvement because citizens tend to lack the knowledge regarding how policies will be implemented.

Conclusion

Policy design scholars have made a series of important contributions to the field of policy studies. Edelman, Fischer, Stone, and others make a convincing case that the content of public policy is normatively driven and that policymakers symbolically manipulate the policy process to achieve value-based ends. Moreover, they make an equally convincing case that rational actor models of political behavior and policy evaluation are unlikely to catch the key policy implications of this normative perspective.

Although their descriptions of the policy process and policy design are not neat and clean, they do move us closer to understanding the content of public policy and what it means for understanding power relationships in society. One of the clear lessons of policy design research is that those who wield political power are those who are able to construct a reality that fits with their proposed policies. Policy design is perhaps best understood as the politics of defining goals or the politics of categorization. Stone (2005) has summed up this argument quite nicely by writing: "policy is precisely this deliberate ordering of the world according to the principle of different treatment for different categories" (ix).

The field of policy design has also contributed significantly to the study of how citizens form perceptions in relation to their government. Policy designs are often utilized to reinforce existing power relationships and

perceptions regarding the appropriate role of government. As Schneider and Ingram (1997) and Soss (2005) noted, values are often embedded in policy designs, and these values have important implications regarding democratic participation. In fact, most policy design scholars agree that the study of policy design provides evidence of nondemocratic values in the policymaking process and non-pluralistic competition, and that policy is often used to reinforce nondemocratic values (see Schneider and Ingram 2005). Stone and Fischer have both agreed that policy evaluations are based on political evaluations. Schneider and Ingram have provided a framework for testing whether these political evaluations have damaging effects on political participation and attitudes toward government.

If the policy process is based on constructed realities and intersubjective interpretations, the obvious question is: how does one determine whether a policy is effective? Edelman, Fischer, and Stone have laid the groundwork for a theory of policy design and policy analysis based on post-positivist methodology. Their primary interest is accounting for "constructed" realities when conducting policy evaluations. Even though Stone and Fischer paint a picture of the policy process that is based on a constructed reality, this does not necessarily mean the policy process is unpredictable (see also Kingdon 1995). Rather, predictability increases once one recognizes the intersubjective nature of policymaking. Schneider and Ingram take this a step further by asking, given that policy design is infused with values, symbols, and stories, what effect does this have on the targets of such policy? Under this framework, "policy design" is treated as both the dependent variable and an important independent variable. We originally asked whose values are inherent in the policy process. As this chapter has made clear, a number of policy scholars see the content of public policies as undemocratic. Scholars describe the process of policy design as deliberate and manipulative, not a rational response to public problems. Policymakers use symbols and language to craft policy in such a way as to perpetuate existing stereotypes. For most of these scholars, policymakers, analysts, and even scholars should be more involved in accounting for the diversity of views shared by citizens affected by particular policies. One practical solution to this dilemma is the notion of more citizen involvement. By allowing for direct citizen participation in the policy process, policy design will reflect the values the citizenry and avoid unintended or intended messages that deter citizen

involvement or deter citizen efficacy. However, as noted in the previous section, there are serious empirical roadblocks regarding this solution.

Notes

1. See also Gilens (2000) for a discussion of the way symbolic language such as "welfare queen" has been used to perpetuate existing stereotypes of welfare recipients and to decrease public support for increasing welfare benefits.

2. Bohte (2007, 812) also used Stone's library example as an example of the difficulty of achieving efficiency in a public organization.

3. Other scholars (L. deLeon and Denhardt 2000) also express criticism at approaches that appear to strengthen the role of policymakers, such as bureaucrats, at the expense of citizens.