

CHAPTER 8

POLICY ANALYSIS FOR DEMOCRACY

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1. INTRODUCTION

Much of what is taught to policy analysts in many policy programs ill equips them to deal with the issues related to the quality of democracy. Traditionally, policy analysis served democracy by concentrating on the efficiency and effectiveness with which stated policy goals were delivered (Bardach 2000; Weimer and Vining 1999). Using tools from macroeconomics, policy analysts have conducted increasingly sophisticated means–ends assessments and theories of the proper role of government vis-à-vis markets (Ostrom 1990; Lindblom 1977). Where political science has a substantial foothold in policy programs, policy analysts have attended to political feasibility and support, responsiveness of policy to citizens, evaluation of the ways in which policies are constructed to reach agreement, and how implementing agencies relate to constituencies, and to each other (Dye 1998; deLeon and Steelman 1999; Ingram and Smith 1993). Today, assuming that efficiency, effectiveness, and political feasibility are the only measures policy analysts should apply in measuring the various policies' contribution to democracy is clearly inadequate.¹ There is an accumulation of both theoretical and empirical work demonstrating that public policies, and the elements in their designs, have important effects on citizenship, justice, and discourse.² The importance of public policy in creating a more just

¹ See Stone 1997; Fischer 1990, 1995; deLeon 1997.

² See Schneider and Ingram 1993, 1997; Mettler and Soss 2004; Landy 1993; Soss 1999.

society is apparent worldwide. Issues of distributive justice and responsive leadership cannot be left only to academic enquiry, but must become more central in the work of the policy analyst (Page 1983; Denhardt and Denhardt 2003). Moreover, the context in which policy analysis is taking place is changing in important ways that make the relationship of policy to democracy especially salient.

Our initial theme is to suggest that the contexts for most public policies are undergoing rapid changes, which require a focus on the democracy gap that has previously received scant attention from policy analysts. We will then explore briefly the meanings of conditions for democracy. We will next posit some possible linkages between democratic conditions and public policy content or design. The bulk of the chapter will be in developing these linkages as a subject matter for policy analysis. Finally, we will examine how the purposes and tools of contemporary policy analysts need to change to serve democracy better. While our principal focus will be on developments in the United States, which is the case we know best, we will refer to parallel developments elsewhere as appropriate.

2. CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT FOR PUBLIC POLICY

The public opinion context in which policy analysis now takes place is extraordinarily critical about government and public policy not only in the United States, but also in other Western democracies.³ In the United States, a large proportion of the public no longer believes that government is able to fulfill the promises embodied in policy goals (Skocpol 2003). Rather than being viewed as the principle collective problem solver, often government is perceived to be as much part of the problem as solution (Savas 2000; Rauch 1994; Kennon 1995). Moreover, the motives of government officials are not trusted. Many people do not believe that government is trying to help people like themselves, and believe instead that the interests of the elite and the members of the government are placed above the interests of ordinary citizens (Dionne 1991; Greider 1992; Sandel 1996).

Despite nearly forty years of seemingly aggressive attempts on the part of government to alleviate gender, racial, and ethnic bias and unequal treatment, disparities remain. In fact, race and gender have not disappeared as issues in most modern democracies but instead are masked beneath rhetoric that may not mention either one. In the United States, but also in many other Western democracies, a number of policy issues have become exceptionally divisive along these cleavages, including crime, public schools, welfare, and immigration. In these issues, political support is

³ See Anderson and Guillory 1997; Norris 1999; Karp, Banducci, and Bowler 2003; Verba et al. 1993.

too often built by appealing to thinly veiled symbols that represent some groups in highly negative terms as unworthy and undeserving. Such portrayals are justification for provision of benefits to positively constructed groups and burdens upon those who are stigmatized as dependent or deviant. In our other work, we have called this degenerative politics because the result is to perpetuate and aggravate divisions among citizens by providing them consistently with quite different treatment at the hands of government (Schneider and Ingram 1997; Ingram and Schneider 2005). The consequence is an American democracy that espouses ideals of equal protection and treatment under the law, while actual treatment by policy of citizens is noticeably and unfairly unequal. There is great variety throughout Western democracies in how much importance is placed on equality or fairness as an outcome of public policy, and in the extent to which governmental practice approaches the ideals of the society. Nevertheless, the US experience toward greater justice and equality is an uneven one and some social issues emerge again and again as if there is no way to solve them “once and for all” (Sidney 2003).

Concern about the vitality of civic society, social capital, and political participation is evident in the United States and the democracies of the Western world.⁴ Robert Putnam’s often-cited thesis that each generation born in the USA since 1920 has shown less interest in civic participation than the one before has generated numerous calls for civic renewal and numerous policies at the federal and local levels to re-engage citizens in the work of democracy (Putnam 2000).

One of the consequences of the disquiet with politics and government in the United States is that governance structures have altered dramatically with decentralization, devolution, and the emergence of a variety of public–private partnership models (Rosenau 2000; Reeves 2003; Salamon 2002). Among the most salient of these changes is that non-profit organizations now play a critical role in policies as widely divergent as private prisons, charter schools, police, fire, substance abuse, and environmental clean-up (Rosenau 2000). Not only is measuring the efficiency and effectiveness of such programs increasingly difficult, lines of democratic control and accountability are different and less direct (Goodin 2003).

3. RELATIONSHIP OF POLICY TO DEMOCRACY

Even as democracy becomes the apparent political system of choice for many nations throughout the world, in the United States it remains an unfinished, open-ended

⁴ Skocpol and Fiorina 1999; Putnam 2000; LeDuc, Niemi, and Norris 1996; Blais and Dobrzynska 1998; Karp and Bowler 2001; Lijphart 1999; Neviite and Kanji 2002.

project. As Dryzek (1996, 1997) has argued, democratic governance is in large part striving to expand the franchise, scope, and authenticity of democracy. Franchise refers to the numbers of participants in any political setting. Scope concerns the domains of life under democratic public control. Authenticity is the degree to which democratic control is substantive, informed, and competency engaged (Dryzek 1997). No one of these proposed enlargements ought to take place at the expense of the other: expanded franchise must not lead to superficial deliberation that hurts authenticity. Of course, there are many forces apart from policy, such as interest groups, political parties, leadership, and the press, that affect the democratic enterprise. However, since the important work of Lowi (1964) and Wilson (1986) that connected the content of policy with patterns of politics, a substantial literature has developed tracing the consequences of public policies to politics and to democracy. Figure 8.1 lays out some pathways through which public policy content may influence the character of democracy.

The third set of boxes in the figure identifies some critical conditions for democracy: There need to be open arenas for public discourse in which all relevant points of view are expressed; citizens ought to view their role as citizens as important, as involving obligations as well as rights, and they must be convinced that government has the interest and capacity to solve public problems; citizens themselves should be supportive of policies and positively involved in producing shared goals; and there must be means to hold government accountable for its actions. These important conditions for democracy are directly related to consequences flowing from policy designs: The framing of issues; how targets are constructed; the structure of implementation and delivery systems; and transparency of governmental actions and citizen access to information. The pathways are not meant to be exhaustive but only suggestive. Also, we recognize that a complete causal model would be recursive, showing how changes in the framing of issues impact policy designs, for example; but our focus here is on how policy itself addresses the conditions of democracy.

The relationships shown in Fig. 8.1 reflect an interest in how policy design, or content, affects the framing of problems and citizen identities through language, symbols, and discourse. The central contention here is that policy analysis must probe how the elements of design found in policy content impact framing, constructions, implementation, and information/transparency, and through these the opportunities offered to citizens. These linkages must become part of what policy analysts do if they wish to understand how and why policy impacts democracy and if they wish to design policy that will better serve democracy. Policy is not a black box from which the analyst can understand outputs or outcomes on the basis of inputs such as citizen demand, support, and resources. Nor is policy a simple extension of culture or public opinion. The ways in which the elements of design (goals, target populations, rationales and images, implementation structures, rules, tools) are configured within policy set the stage for what follows.

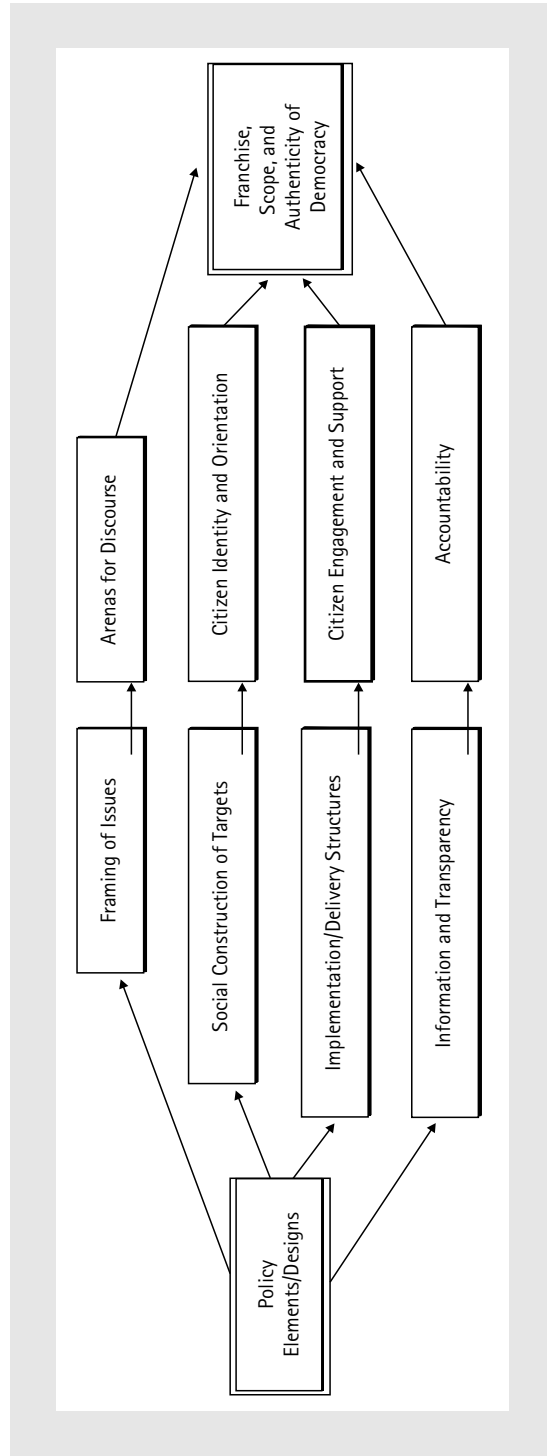


Figure 8.1. Linking policy design to democracy

4. CREATION OF PUBLIC ARENAS AND OPEN FORUMS FOR DISCOURSE

Robust democracy requires open public forums in which citizens can and should be asked to confront policy problems that affect them directly. In such forums people are encouraged to face policy problems not solely as clients or interest groups, but as citizens who can incorporate the view of others in their own “civic discovery” of what constitutes the collective welfare. Whether or not such arenas emerge is at least in part a function of policy framing and design.

It is a political truism that whoever defines the problem has control of the design of solutions (Bardach 1981; Rochefort and Cobb 1994; Baumgartner and Jones 1993). Problems do not just happen. They are constructed through the interaction of a variety of political phenomena including existing public policies. The definitions embodied in policies that characterize what is at stake in particular subject areas can lead to processes of democratic discovery or drastically limit participation and debate. Different problem definitions locate political discourse in particular value contexts and elicit particular kinds of participants, participation, and institutional response. According to the way an issue is framed, different boundaries of interest or jurisdiction are created. Different people get involved, for example, when domestic violence is defined as a health rather than criminal justice issue. Different values are at stake when an issue is framed in moral rather than economic terms. Framing also affects participants’ empathy or willingness to see other perspectives and the likelihood of compromise.

As an example, historians and political scientists in the field of water policy have argued that a misunderstanding of Spanish colonial customary law led western states of the USA to adopt the idea that water rights could be owned as property for growing crops, and later for municipalities and industries. It followed that since water was property, water rights holders were the appropriate decision makers. That meant that the arenas constructed for the discussion of water matters became irrigation districts that focused upon questions of allocation and delivery. Left out of such forums were non-consumptive, non-owner users of water such as recreationists and wildlife enthusiasts and others concerned with the myriad ways water affects the environment. As time passed, water policy evolved to give water other associated meanings: water as product and water as commodity. Water reclamation policy treated water as the output of water development processes of dams and diversions designed to reduce risks, to secure supplies, and to spread water rights allocations to additional users. The arenas in which water development decisions were made not surprisingly consisted of existing and prospective water rights owners as well as producers and managers of large-scale engineering works.

Most recently federal and state water policy has redefined water as a commodity to increase flexibility and efficiency of water reallocations. The discourse in arenas so

constructed is between willing buyers and sellers. This does not mean that environmentalists have had no voice in water resource arenas. In fact, they have exerted considerable veto power through policies that require environmental assessments and protect endangered species. However, they certainly have not been participants in public forums with anything like an equal footing, largely because of the way the issue has been framed in policy. Moreover, water quantity has tended to be separated from water quality, and from other issues such as riparian habitat for birds and other wildlife and the rights of indigenous peoples. The importance of water to a sense of community and place has been marginalized.

Over the past decade, a competitive frame for considering water has taken hold, which has variously called itself ecosystems or watershed approaches. The impetus for framing water differently came largely from the grass roots, but supportive embodiments in federal agency programs and policies have been important (Yafee 1998). At present, seventeen federal agencies have endorsed ecosystems approaches (Michaels 1999). State-level laws authorizing watershed planning such as the Massachusetts Watershed Initiative and the Oregon Plans have also been critical. The most distinguishing mark of this new way of looking at water is that it reintegrates water into the broad ecological and social processes from which it was disembodied by property, product, and commodity framing. Watershed planning embraces equal concern between healthy ecosystems and communities, and envisions them as closely related (Johnson and Campbell 1999). Watershed associations, the arenas for public discourse associated with this emergent framing, involve a wide range of stakeholders including local property holders and citizen coalitions, county state and federal agencies, scientists, corporations, environmental organizations, and the general public. Boundaries for involvement are broadly open and inclusive, encompassing all those who are affected by and have knowledge about particular watersheds. Decision rules vary, but emphasis is placed on consensus building. Those involved accept the equal standing of different kinds of information ranging from laboratory science to detailed experiential understanding based upon long-standing familiarity with place. The watershed management vision includes specific attention to representation, assistance for weaker parties, full and fair opportunity for all participants to participate in the negotiation processes, and respect for cultural values (Johnson and Campbell 1999). Whatever the ambiguities of the watershed approach, and it is not without its inconsistencies (Blomquist and Schlager 2000), the consequence for democracy appears to be quite positive.

Another example of how a policy can frame an issue in a way which has adverse effects on discourse is the Superfund legislation. Mark Landy (1993) has argued that the goal of the Act, which insists on cleaning up all toxic and hazardous waste dumps to all applicable standards, does not encourage people to think intelligently about the issue. It appears to establish a total freedom from risk, but there are far too many sites and the cost of clean-ups is too high for this goal to be obtainable. Because federal dollars, supposedly recovered from polluters, carry most of the burden, citizens are not encouraged to deliberate over which allocations of clean-up efforts are most desirable. As a consequence, precious environmental protection resources are

misallocated and citizen cynicism that laws do not live up to promises is perpetuated (Landy 1993; Hird 1994).

One of the proposals to redefine the issue and to encourage deliberation begins by making distinctions between different kinds of inactive and abandoned hazardous waste sites (Hird 1994). Older sites at which dumping was legal at the time and where there were no strong connections linking the site to original polluters should be removed from Superfund jurisdiction and made eligible for funding from a National Environmental Restoration Fund. Such sites along with other salient environmental problems such as asbestos removal, radon or lead remediation, or other environmental hot spots are to be relabeled and reframed as environmental restoration problems. Such reframing allows numbers of chronic, long-term risks to community and health to be seen in the same light and considered together. Hird argues that a new kind of arena for discourse then becomes possible. Each state, according to the proposal, would establish a committee of citizen representatives, some of whom live near the waste sites, but also including governmental officials and scientists to decide how the fund allocated by the federal government to the state would be spent (Hird 1994). Citizens would be encouraged through this policy change to engage in discourse about relative risk and values of restored lands in different places. Rather than asserting some absolute right, citizens would deliberate about the value added to different areas by different kinds and levels of restoration.

Similar dynamics are found in many social policies. Traditional societies, for example, conceptualized crime as a violation against an individual and his or her family and tribe. The appropriate enforcers were the victim and victim's family. In some cultures, the prescribed punishment was decided through negotiations between the victim's family and the offender's family. The arenas for discourse belonged to the individuals and groups to which they were culturally tied. In contrast, modern Western societies view crime as an offense against the state. This construction of crime results in enforcement belonging to the state, and the state (not the victim) being the appropriate decision maker regarding the amount and type of punishment or rehabilitation. In addition to changing who the relevant decision makers are, this change (as well as in many other social policies) places decision-making authority within a highly specialized body of knowledge and prescribes what kinds of training are needed if one is to participate. One of the results is that participation becomes increasingly the province of highly specialized knowledge groups. Ordinary citizens scarcely participate at all in dialogue about appropriate responses to crime, or even what sorts of things ought to be considered "crimes." Because these policies lend themselves to highly divisive social constructions of the target populations (a point we will return to below), policy entrepreneurs and those intent on finding issues to be used for political advantage manipulate public opinion, rendering intelligent discourse almost non-existent. Arenas of discourse become contaminated and used as "wedge issues" dominated by negative, divisive, and harmful social constructions of social groups and events.

There have been numerous attempts to reform criminal justice policy and bring it into the province of rational discussion where responses to behavior that is harmful

to others or to the society are more uniform and more proportionate to the harm that is done. The juvenile court, for example, is an invention of public policy that traces to the late 1800s where youthful offenders—for whom the harsh penalties of the times seemed too extreme—were separated by policy from “hardened criminals” thereby permitting more lenient and humane responses to the former and continuing with the harshness directed at the latter. These changes also shifted the forms of knowledge specialization such that the juvenile court became dominated by “treatment” philosophies of social workers, psychologists, and educators who believed in rehabilitation. From the 1970s onward, this type of policy separation has continued such that “status offenders” are now separated from “serious juvenile offenders,” with different decision makers and arenas for each. Another innovation is to reframe “crime” from being exclusively a legal problem dealt with by police and courts after the fact to a community development issue or a public health problem (Thornton et al. 2000; Howell 1995). This shifts the prevention activities from police and courts, with programs such as “scared straight,” or DARE, to those in which ordinary citizens in the community have a greater opportunity for participation.

Experiments with restorative justice both in the United States and elsewhere offer an interesting case in point (Braithwaite 2002; Bazemore et al. 1998; Schneider and Warner 1987; Galaway and Hudson 1996). Restorative justice approaches reconceptualize the offender, not as an incorrigible deviant who is a danger to society, but as a virtuous person who has made a mistake for which he or she needs to be held accountable (Braithwaite 2002; Bazemore et al. 1998; Schneider and Warner 1987). These approaches also reframe the appropriate response, rejecting both the medical model in which agents of the state “treat” the offender and the deterrence model in which the state punishes the offender. Instead, the principle of justice is a responsibility model in which offenders are expected to restore victims and the community even as they restore themselves to a contributing member of the society. Restorative justice involves a process through which victim, offender, and community participate in determining the measure of responsibility and accountability. This reverses the modernist trend toward statist responses to crime in favor of responses that permit those who have been harmed (local community and direct victim) to participate within regulations enforced by the state. The victim, offender, and community are all to be restored through a process that brings understanding to the offender of the harm done and that negotiates a sanction all believe to be fair. By reframing the issue and changing the social construction of the offender, restorative justice programs change the decision-making arena, the decision makers, and the results of the decisions.

These examples of how policy designs frame issues and thereby shape the decision-making arenas and the types of knowledge that are brought to bear only hint at the large number of similar issues begging for intelligent policy analysis. What is the impact of the creation of special districts for particularized service delivery? What have been the impacts of the social justice statements now required in many policy areas in Australia? What are the impacts of the movement away from geographically based to service-based jurisdictional lines? Public policies in many US states provide

for citizen initiatives and referendum in a form of direct democracy that is increasingly being used. This enlarges the franchise of democracy in that it opens to the voting public direct legislative authority; but what are the actual impacts on authenticity—on informed discourse and intelligent policy with predictable results (Broder 2000)? Policies that have constructed various types of arenas for public participation in no way anticipated the emergence of the Internet and the ability of people to communicate so quickly over such large distances and with so many others of similar beliefs. How is this affecting the framing of issues, the emergence of social movements, and the formation of entirely new arenas for discourse (Margolis and Resnick 2000)? There is some evidence to suggest that transnational environmental movements encompassing grass-roots groups with shared interests on different sides of international borders are being enabled to act in concert through information shared and networks built in the cyberspace (Doughman 2001; Levesque 2001). Indigenous people are communicating worldwide and taking their case for indigenous rights increasingly into international arenas.

5. IDENTITY AND ORIENTATION OF CITIZENS

The skepticism and negative attitudes of citizens toward government and public policy are among the growing challenges to American democracy. While there are many causes, the experiences citizens have with public policy are among them. Public policies do more than simply deliver services or implement goals. They also carry messages. The ways in which various publics are treated by policy—whether their views of problems are recognized as legitimate or ignored; whether they are targeted for burdens or benefits; the rules to which they are subjected such as means testing; and the reception they encounter in interaction with implementing agencies—all teach lessons related to democracy (Schneider and Ingram 1997, 2005; Esping-Andersen 1990, 2002).

There is mounting evidence, particularly from the social welfare field, that implicit messages delivered by policy have significant consequences for the construction of citizenship and the role of government (Mettler and Soss 2004). Policies sometimes implicitly signal who is important to national welfare and who is not. In her book *Divided Government*, Suzanne Mettler (1998) argued that New Deal social policies treated white males very differently from women and men of color. Policy sent messages that white males were the significant economic and political actors. While white males were brought under the mantle of national citizenship through social security, white women were included only as widows, and minority domestics and farm workers were ignored until much later. The welfare of women and children was assigned by New Deal policies to the states with varying levels of benefits and state agencies favoring intrusive, paternalistic rules. As a result, a kind of two-tiered,

dual citizenship resulted, under which women, and men of color, were treated as second-class citizens not fully incorporated into the mainstream of economic and political life.

Policies carry messages by socially constructing the intended targets in positive and negative terms. In our writing, we have argued that different targets for policy are treated differently and come away with quite distinct identities as citizens and sharply contrasting orientations toward government (Schneider and Ingram 1993; Sidney 2003). Advantaged populations are powerful and positively constructed as good and deserving citizens. They mainly receive benefits from government, and are treated with respect and governmental outreach so that their interests are portrayed as the same as public interests. Advantaged populations view themselves as efficacious and their participation is reinforced. In contrast, other groups whose constructions are not so positive receive fewer benefits and more burdens and pick up messages that their problems are not public but private or of their own making. Only conditional benefits are allocated to them by government, and then only upon successful application. Government is likely to treat them with pity, disrespect, or hostility.

Contemporary experience with welfare policies suggests that the messages damaging to democracy persist. One study of some welfare mothers in Phoenix, whose comments in focus groups were recorded, illustrates messages sent and orientations toward government affected (Luna 2000). Long waits for, and the unreliability of, service and seemingly capricious decisions, led welfare clients to believe that agency officials regarded them as unimportant, dishonest, and unworthy. For example, one mother said:

They're [the welfare case workers] telling me "you have 30 to 45 days to get your case done." I told her I have rent to pay. I need my necessities. They can't understand that. They shrug their shoulders and say, "well they still have 30 to 45 days, and they have other clients." I understand that, but I complied and I did my part like you wanted me to. I was preapproved. All you need to do . . . They're the ones who have the computer. You just put it in and send it. But they want to prolong it.

Another woman added: "They act like it's coming out of their pocket. They act like when they get their check, they are going to each of their clients' houses and say, 'ok, here's your fifty, here's your fifty,' and they ain't giving me a dime."

These comments echo many heard by Joe Soss who interviewed clients in a mid-size Midwestern city (Soss 1999). He found that clients of the means-tested program, then the AFDC, believed by overwhelming percentages that government employees are autonomous, that is, "Governmental officials do whatever they want, whenever they want" (Soss 1999, 369). In addition, he found that only 8 per cent of AFDC recipients believe that government listens to people like them. Such attitudes substantially affect the willingness of target groups to participate in politics. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995; Verba et al. 1993) found that public assistance clients were under-represented in every political activity measured. There is real evidence, therefore, that the social constructions built into policies contribute importantly to

the existing democracy gap. Those who would seem to have most to gain from participation in the design of the welfare system are the least likely to become engaged. Moreover, the differences in messages received from policy by different racial and gender groups fuel the cleavages within American society and lower the possibility of the citizens' empathy being important to democratic discourse.

A far more encouraging picture of how policy can overcome negative identity conferred by broad social norms is found in the Head Start program. Soss (1999) found that single welfare mothers who had previous experience in the Head Start program developed political orientations and efficacy virtually identical to other citizens, whereas welfare recipients without this type of experience were the least likely to engage in political activity. The Head Start program requires parent participation in shaping the child's education and through this type of policy design emboldens those who otherwise remain very passive in their role as citizen.

6. ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Public policies that serve democracy need to garner support, stimulate civic engagement, and encourage cooperation in the solution of problems.

It is difficult for public policies to achieve goals without sufficient support. Hostile legislators and non-compliant agents and targets can often thwart policy intent. Further, the extent of policy support is an important measure of representation and responsiveness. Policies also can greatly affect the extent of civic volunteerism and civil society. Governmental action can displace private charities and crowd out community problem solving (Skocpol 2003).

The structures of implementation and service delivery embodied in policy have a profound impact upon citizen engagement. The dangers of large-scale bureaucracy to democracy have been thoroughly researched and are widely appreciated (Wood 1994). Public agencies tend to substitute organizational goals in the place of policy intent. Caseworkers in some agencies tend to believe that they must break the rules in some (or many) instances if they are to do what is fair and helpful for their clients (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003). The development of specialized areas of policy leads to the dominance of expert knowledge over ordinary grass-roots experiential knowledge and the demise of local knowledge and contextual experience. There is an emphasis in most public agencies of process over content—a reliance on rule compliance rather than tailoring the rules to ensure delivery of desired goals within the local context. Efforts to overcome rules that actually thwart policy success are the source of much of the red tape associated with large hierarchical organizations. Specialists in public agencies are very much a part of the narrowly based, self-serving iron triangles that bring together legislative interests, agencies, and powerful

interest groups who are the agency clients. Partly under the banner of strengthening democracy, decentralization, devolution, and contracting out predominate in contemporary policy designs (Minow 2002, 2003; Smith and Lipsky 1993). While these designs arguably may bring implementation and service delivery structures closer to local people, their actual impact upon democracy varies widely.

Studies of partnerships between government and non-profits and their effects upon the authenticity and responsiveness of volunteer organizations deliver mixed results. Some scholars provide examples of governmental actions that spur citizen mobilization and voluntarism (Baker 1993; Marston 1993) or that permit neighborhood-based organizations to carry out missions of providing services to the “poorest of the poor” who often are overlooked by more highly specialized service delivery agencies (Camou 2005). Others find that government funding of non-profits leads to professionalization of staffs, lowered dependence upon volunteers and community ties, and competition among non-profits for particular service niches (Lipsky and Smith 1990; Smith 1998). Studies by Jurik and Cowgill (2005) found that even a non-profit fully devoted to serving the very poor through a micro enterprise loan program, over time, shifted their construction of who the appropriate clients would be to mirror the expectations of the business culture in which they were operating and dependent on for funding. Much would seem to depend upon the particular policy design and the resulting nature of the public–private partnership within particular contexts.

Public–private partnerships take a variety of forms other than government funding of non-profit organizations for service delivery. Some of this activity involves significant public investment in infrastructure (such as ball fields, airports, shopping malls), research and development of innovation, or even new products (Reeves 2003; Rosenau 2000).

Other public–private partnerships have been used to avoid prolonged and debilitating conflict. The Environmental Protection Agency, for example, used a tool described as “civic environmentalism” to avoid a Superfund designation which might have put an end to a revitalization plan in downtown Wichita, Kansas. A plan was negotiated between state and local government officials, the business community, and residents to allow the city to take over clean-up operations of a contaminated site involving many businesses and large acreage. Banks agreed not to deny loans based solely on the contamination of property; the city’s liability was limited to what it could collect from responsible parties and property taxes; the polluter agreed to pay for part of the clean-up; and the state government agreed to pass a law creating a special redevelopment district (Knopman, Megan, and Landy 1999). Weale discusses a similar British-based controversy on efforts to democratize decisions about risk (Weale 2001).

Contracting, vouchers, and other partnerships are often successful in building public support for services to dependent groups lacking in political power. Contracting for services with private organizations continues to expand throughout the USA. The contract agency provides a service for government using government funds. In the process, the contract agency becomes a client of government with

keen interest in perpetuating and raising funding for the program. Providers band together in supportive associations and supporters also include board members and staffs of private organizations. Since service providers have roots in the community, local support for programs often rises. Similarly, housing vouchers often win the support of landlords for low-income housing programs, which they bitterly opposed when delivery was through public housing (Smith and Ingram 2002).

This same dynamic can work against deviant or dependent groups who lack political power, however, when discipline or punishment is being delivered rather than benefits. Studies of private prisons indicate that this policy design builds a powerful, private sector constituency that competes with public sector prisons for “clients.” Prisoners become commodities, and those who advocate expansion in the scope and harshness of punishment have gained a powerful economic ally. When prison policy shifts toward entitlement funding, based on the number of prisoners, there are both public and private sector advocates to continue increasing the number of prisoners. These dynamics are at least partly responsible for the fact that the United States in 2004 had the highest rate of imprisonment in the world (Schneider 2005).

Service learning programs can facilitate civic engagement and support. In the case of Americorps, students prepay some of their college tuition while at the same time becoming actively engaged in community problem solving. The evaluations of the impact of Americorps upon participants’ attitudes and behavior are still preliminary, but there is some evidence that service increases the propensity of Americorps’ alumni toward greater participation in voluntary associations (Simon and Wang 2000).

7. ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability is critical to democratic governance, and is quite different from political support. The traditional notion of accountability through politically elected and appointed officials operates poorly in an era of decentralization, devolution, and public–private partnerships. In these new patterns of governance, the public must become more directly involved in holding governance structures accountable. There must be accountability built among partners in complex implementation or service delivery relationships. This implies transparency in transactions and full disclosure of interests. From the perspective of democracy, it is important that actors be held accountable not just for the delivery of programmatic goals, but also for fair and equitable actions.

Accountability of the contemporary implementation and service delivery structures is especially difficult because of the complexity of structures, the diffusion of

responsibility, lack of understandable information, and competing values among implementers. Goodin (2003) contends that there are different types of accountability mechanisms that need to be used for markets, the state, and the non-profit sector—actions, results, and intentions, respectively. He also argues that the mechanisms of accountability differ, with hierarchy the dominant model for the state, competition for the market, and cooperative networking for the non-profit sector. For public agencies, the implementation literature makes clear that slippage is most apt to occur in long policy-delivery chains (Pressman and Wildavsky 1973). It is possible for the proximate beneficiary of policy to gain resources such as funds for job training, drug treatment, or health services, without delivering full value to the ultimate targets. Child welfare agencies, for example, provide keen support for the programs through which they get funding, but have resisted evaluations and performance measures and remain a deeply troubled area of public policy around the USA (Smith and Ingram 2002).

There are ongoing experiments to improve accountability in the emerging organizational context. The Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act of 1986 introduced an interesting model for lowering the transaction costs of obtaining information critical to citizen education, mobilization, and participation. Under the legislation, industries must make public the amounts and location of releases of a large number of potentially damaging toxic substances. The Act is not without flaws, but it has spurred citizen protests and helped to create a sense of community with common stakes among all residents affected by exposure to dangerous substances. “Benchmarking” is a technique increasingly used to improve non-profit performance in delivery of services. It entails investigating the “best practices” in a particular area and then using those criteria to measure performance. “Organizational report cards” have been used to provide information to the public in modes that are easily understandable (Smith and Ingram 2002). The extent to which such accountability mechanisms actually work in practice is in need of analysis.

There is likely to be a direct relationship between the social construction and power of the target groups and the imposition of successful accountability mechanisms. For instance, it has been forcefully argued that the social construction of criminals as deviants suggests that attempts to hold private prisons accountable will be difficult. There is simply insufficient interest in the welfare of or fairness to inmates (Schneider 1999). Moreover, it is probably easier to hold implementation structures accountable for efficiency and effectiveness than for democratic values such as due process, openness, and diversity of clients served. It is much simpler to hold charter schools to some standard of student performance on tests than it is to assure that such schools reflect the diversity of value perspectives in American society.

8. CHALLENGE FOR THE POLICY ANALYST

Exploring the kinds of questions and linkages suggested here requires that the policy analyst must evaluate government and governance structures quite differently from simply measuring effectiveness and efficiency. Analysts need to be especially attentive to ancillary effects of actions beyond goal fulfillment. Government must be measured by its ability to intervene strategically in the complex networks of policy delivery systems to encourage better access to information, to correct for power imbalances and damaging stereotypes and social constructions among stakeholders, and to create arenas and spheres of public discourse. Policy analysts must be prepared to unmask framing of problems and social constructions of targets that are degenerative and damaging to democracy. Policy analysts may also be called upon to suggest alternative policy tools, rules, and implementation structures that facilitate the conditions for democracy.

Policy analysts will need to hone skills beyond quantitative policy analysis and system modeling to incorporate these criteria into policy assessments. Additional attention should be given to in-depth interviewing skills including various kinds of narrative analysis. The use of stories, for example, of how street-level policy workers assess client identities and deliver policy that they view as “fair” (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003) offers rich insights into the day-to-day work of policy implementers that would be invaluable in helping structure public organizations to release the tension between rule-boundedness and discretionary judgements. Ethnographic and participant observation are vital elements of the policy analyst’s work yet are paid scant attention in most policy analysis methodological texts. Participatory policy analysis has been used very effectively not only to assess how and why a program is having certain kinds of impacts, but in designing better alternatives. Further, we need to recognize that policy analysis is inherently a normative exercise and that the values of democracy are in need of particular analytical attention. Thus, interpretative methodologies must be incorporated into the tool kit of the policy analysts.

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