Does Politics Cause Policy?
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As detailed in chapter one, the field of policy studies is often criticized for its theoretical poverty. Yet even though conventional wisdom regards the policy sciences as contributing few explanatory frameworks that help us systematically understand the political and social world, we believe the evidence suggests otherwise. In fact, the policy sciences have produced at least two frameworks that continue to serve as standard conceptual tools to organize virtually the entire political world: policy typologies and the stages theory.

These two frameworks are generally remembered as theoretical failures, either failing to live up their original promise because of the universal inability to separate fact and value in the political realm (typologies), or failing to be a causal theory at all (policy stages). These criticisms are, as we shall see, not without merit. Yet both of these frameworks suggest the policy field conceives of its theoretical jurisdiction in very broad terms, and that even when its conceptual frameworks come up short, they leave a legacy of insight and understanding that help organize and make sense of a complicated world.

The stages theory (or what many would more accurately term the stages heuristic) is perhaps the best-known framework of the policy process. Yet by most criteria it does not qualify as a good theory because it is descriptive rather than causal and it does little to explain why the process happens the way it does. Theodore Lowi's original notion of a policy typology was nothing less than a general theory of politics—it raised the possibility that the study of politics would become, in effect, a subdiscipline of the study of public policy. Lowi posited the startling possibility that policy caused politics, rather than the reverse causal pathway still assumed by most students of politics and policy. Typologies ultimately foundered on a set of operational difficulties, difficulties quickly identified but never fully resolved. For these reasons typologies and the stages heuristic, if anything, are more likely to be used as evidence for the theoretical shortcomings of policy studies as opposed to evidence for its worthy contributions. Yet despite their problems, both are still employed to bring systematic coherence to a difficult and disparate field. Even though both are arguably "bad" in the sense that they did not live up to their original promise (typologies) or are not a theory at all (stages heuristic), at a bare minimum they continue to help clarify what is being studied (the process of policymaking, the outcomes of policymaking), why it is important, and how systematic sense can be made of the subject. The general point to be made in this chapter is that if there is such a thing as a distinct field of policy studies, it must define itself by its ability to clarify its concepts and its key questions and to contribute robust answers to those questions. This is what good theory does. And as two of the better-known "failures" in policy theory clearly demonstrate, the field of policy studies is not just attempting to achieve these ends, it is at least partially succeeding.

Good Policy Theory

What are the characteristics of a good theory, and what are the characteristics of a good theory of public policy? Lasswell's notion of the policy sciences, with its applied problem orientation, its multidisciplinary background, and its call for complex conceptual frameworks, set a high bar for policy theory. Standing on a very diffuse academic foundation, it was not only expected to explain a lot but also to literally solve democracy's

biggest problems. It is little wonder theory in public policy when measured against this yardstick is judged as falling short. Such expectations are perhaps the right goal to shoot for, but no conceptual framework in social science is going to live up to them.

McCool (1995c, 13–17) suggested good theory in public policy should exhibit these characteristics: validity (an accurate representation of reality), economy, testability, organization/understanding (it imposes order), heuristic (it serves as a guidepost for further research), causal explanation, predictive, relevance/usefulness, powerful (it offers nontrivial inferences), reliability (it supports replication), objectivity, and honesty (it makes clear the role of values). The exhaustiveness of McCool's list makes it almost as ambitious as the burdens placed on policy theory by the Lasswellian vision. Getting any single theory to reflect all of these traits would present serious challenges in any discipline, let alone one attempting to describe the chaotic world of politics and the policy process. In fact, McCool readily admitted that it is highly unlikely that policy theory would contain all of these characteristics. Policy typologies and the stages heuristic certainly do not accomplish this feat; they both lack some of these key traits (e.g., the stages heuristic is not predictive; policy typologies arguably have reliability problems). Yet both frameworks reflect a majority of this intimidating list of theoretical ideals, which is perhaps why they continue to be used to make sense of the policy and political world.

Policy Stages: A First Attempt at Policy Theory

Given the broad scope of its studies and the vagueness about key concepts, a not inconsiderable challenge for policy theory is trying to figure out what it is trying to explain. Individual behavior? Institutional decision making? Process? In his "pre-view" of the policy sciences, Lasswell (1971, 1) argued the primary objective was to obtain "knowledge *of* and *in* the decision processes of the public and civic order." For Lasswell, this knowledge takes the form of "systematic, empirical studies of how policies are made and put into effect" (1971, 1). Given this initial focus, policy process was an early focal point of theoretical work in the field. But where in the policy process to start? What does the policy process look like? What exactly should we be observing when we are studying public policy? What is the unit of analysis?

TABLE 2.1 **The Evolution of Stages Theory**

Policy Scholar	Proposed Stages Model
An Introduction to the Study of Public Policy Charles O. Jones (1970, 11–12)	*Elements:* Perception Definition Aggregation/organization Representation Formulation Legitimation Application/administration Reaction Evaluation/appraisal Resolution/termination *Categories:* Problem to government Action in government Government to problem Policy to government Problem resolution or change
A Pre-View of the PolicySciences Harold D. Lasswell (1971, 28)	Intelligence Promotion Prescription Invocation Application Termination Appraisal
Public Policy-Making James E. Anderson (1974, 19)	Problem identification and agenda formation Formulation Adoption Implementation Evaluation
The Foundations of Policy Analysis Garry D. Brewer and Peter deLeon (1983, 18)	Initiation Estimation Selection Implementation Evaluation Termination
Policy Analysis in Political Science Randall B. Ripley (1985, 49)	Agenda setting Formulation and legitimation of goals and programs Program implementation Evaluation of implementation, performance, and impacts Decisions about the future of the policy and program

Table 2.1 traces the lineage of what would become the stages model of the policy process. The similarity across the models should be evident. First a problem must come to the attention of the government. Policymakers then develop solutions to address the problem, ultimately implementing what they perceive as the most appropriate solution, and then evaluate whether or not it served its purpose.

For Lasswell (1971), the policy process was fundamentally about how policymakers make decisions. As such, Lasswell's initial attempt to model the policy process was based more generally on how best to model decision processes. Lasswell identified a set of phases common to any decision process: the recognition of a problem, the gathering of information and proposals to address the problem, implementation of a proposal, followed by possible termination and then appraisal of the proposal. The seven stages listed in Table 2.1 were meant to descriptively capture this process as it applied to policy decisions.

Writing at roughly the same time as Lasswell, Charles Jones (1970) also placed a strong emphasis on examining the process of policymaking. For Jones, the focus should not be solely on the outputs of the political system but instead on the entire policy process, from how a problem is defined to how governmental actors respond to the problem to the effectiveness of a policy. As Jones wrote, this "policy" approach is an attempt to "describe a variety of processes designed to complete the policy cycle" (1970, 4). Although Lasswell identified what could be considered stages of the decision process, it is with Jones that we see the first attempt to model the process of public policy decisions. For Jones, the policy process could aptly be summarized by a distinct set of "elements" listed in Table 2.1.

Jones's focus on the elements of the policy process is very much in line with Lasswell's interest in "knowledge *of*" the policy process. The policy process begins with perception of a problem and ends with some sort of resolution or termination of the policy. Jones, however, moved the evaluation element, what Lasswell (1971) would describe as "appraisal," to immediately prior to the decision to terminate or adjust a policy. Because public problems are never "solved" (C. Jones 1970, 135), evaluations of the enacted policy must be made in order to best decide how to adjust the current policy to fit with existing demands. Jones went on to more broadly classify these ten elements as fitting within five general categories. These categories are meant to illustrate "what government does to act on public problems" (C. Jones 1970, 11).

The phases laid out by Lasswell and Jones conceptualize public policy as a linear decision-making process of linked stages that very much reflects a rationalist perspective: a problem is identified; alternative responses considered; the "best" solution adopted; the impact of this solution evaluated; and on the basis of evaluation the policy is continued, revised, or terminated. In laying out this linear process Lasswell and Jones were essentially trying to describe the policy process and organize it into coherent and manageable terms. The "phases" or "elements" are merely descriptive terms they used for patterns regularly observed by policy scholars at the time.

The big advantage of the stages approach formulated by Lasswell and Jones, as well as contemporary stages models such as that forwarded by James Anderson (1974), is that they provided an intuitive and practical means of conceptualizing and organizing the study of public policy. They provided a basic frame of reference to understand what the field of policy studies was about.

Various refinements of the stages model have been offered, though all retain the basic formulation of a linear process, albeit one in a continuous loop (e.g., Brewer and deLeon 1983; Ripley 1985). The common patterns are clearly evident in Table 2.1, which all portray public policy as a continuous process, one where problems are never solved, they are only addressed.

The stages model provides a generally agreed upon, and widely used, description of the process of public policymaking. Although different variations used different labels for the phases or stages, the fundamental model was always a rationalistic, problem-oriented, linear process in a continual loop. While the stages models seemed to impose order and make intuitive sense of an incredibly complex process, policy scholars were quick to identify their drawbacks, not the least of which were that they did not seem to be testable.

Stages Model: Descriptive or Predictive?

Critics have cited two main drawbacks of the stages approach. First, it tends to produce piecemeal theories for studying the policy process. Those interested in agenda setting focus on one set of policy research, whereas those interested in policy analysis focus on another, whereas those interested in policy implementation focus on still another aspect

of the process. In other words, the stages model divides rather than unites the field of policy studies, reducing the likelihood of producing a unifying theory of public policy. Such a view also tends to create the perception that the stages are disconnected from one another, or at least can be disconnected and studied in isolation, and that the policy process is best viewed as proceeding neatly between stages. This criticism is far from fatal. A unified model of public policy is a very tall order, and it is unlikely that viewing policy from the stages perspective is a major obstacle to developing such a theory. Indeed, in the absence of a unifying theory, the stages model arguably creates an intuitive and useful division of labor for policy scholars, putting focus on the construction of more manageable conceptual frameworks in specific stages such as agenda setting or implementation.

A second frequent criticism is that the stages model assumes a linear model of the policymaking, discounting the notion of feedback loops between different stages or different starting points for the entire process (P. deLeon 1999b, 23). Again, we do not see this as a fatal flaw in the stages model. If the process is continuous, disagreements over starting points and feedback loops are all but unavoidable. The most damaging criticism, especially for a conceptual model arising from the policy sciences, was the claim that the stages model was not particularly scientific.

The basis of any scientific theory is the production of empirically falsifiable hypotheses. What are the hypotheses that come from the stages model? What hypothesis can we test about how a problem reaches the government agenda? What hypothesis can we test about the alternative that will be selected for implementation? What hypothesis can we test about policy evaluation? These questions point to the fundamental flaw with the stages model as a theory of public policy—it is not really a theory at all. It is a descriptive classification of the policy process; it says what happens without saying anything about why it happens. Paul Sabatier (1991a, 145) has written that the stages model "is not really a causal theory at all . . . [with] no coherent assumptions about what forces are driving the process from stage to stage and very few falsifiable hypotheses." In fact, Sabatier (1991b, 147) went on to refer to the stages approach as the "stages heuristic." A scientific study of public policy should allow for hypothesis testing about relationships between variables in the policy process. This is the central flaw for many policy scholars: because the stages model does not really generate any hypotheses to test, it renders

the whole framework as little more than a useful example of what a bad theory of policy looks like.

The stages model does not even suggest a useful list of variables for policy scholars. Stages heuristics suffers from the process it seeks to explain. Variables that explain some aspect of the policy process at one stage may be insignificant at another (Greenberg et al. 1977). It is generally accepted that the stages approach provides weak guidance for those interested in empirical tests of the causal relationships underlying public policymaking. But does this warrant complete rejection of the model? Does the stages model contribute nothing to our understanding of the policy process?

The stages heuristic or stages model is useful for its simplicity and direction. It provides policy researchers with a broad and generalizable outline of the policy process as well as a way of organizing policy research. Good policy theory should be generalizable and broad in scope (Sabatier 2007). The stages model fits these criteria. Because of the stages approach, we also know what makes up what Peter deLeon (1999b, 28) referred to as the "parts" of the policy process. In fact, within the field of academic policy research, scholarly interest tends to break down along the stages model. There is a definitive research agenda that focuses on problem definition and how a policy problem reaches the decision making and government agenda, often referred to as the agenda-setting literature (Cobb and Elder 1983; Nelson 1984; Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Kingdon 1995; Stone 2002). Another research agenda focuses on policy implementation and policy evaluation (Fischer 1995). For this group of scholars, the key question is: what should we do? A third group of researchers is more broadly interested in how policies change over time and what causes significant breaks from existing policies (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Jones and Baumgartner 2005). And still another group is interested in the effects of policy design on citizen attitudes and behavior (Schneider and Ingram 1997).

The burgeoning literature in each of these stages has no doubt contributed immensely to our understanding of various aspects of the policy process. In fact, Paul Sabatier, a prominent critic of the utility of the stages model as model for studying public policy (see Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier 1993), has credited the work of Nelson (1984) and Kingdon (1995) as evidence of theory testing within public policy (Sabatier 1991a, 145). In other words, there are useful theories within each stage of the

stages approach (see also Chapter 1, Table 1.1). For Sabatier, the stages model is best viewed not as a model but as a "heuristic" for understanding the policy process. Although the stages approach may lack falsifiability, it continues to provide a (perhaps the) major conceptualization of the scope of public policy studies and provides a handy means of organizing and dividing labor in the field. We would venture to guess that most introductory graduate seminars in public policy include Baumgartner and Jones (1993), Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier (1993), Kingdon (1995), and Stone (2002), as well as some readings in policy evaluation and policy analysis. In short, the stages heuristic has organized, and continues to organize, the discipline for researchers and students.

From a Kuhnian perspective, the stage model remains viable (Kuhn 1970). As Kuhn has argued, "paradigms" are not completely rejected until a new replacement paradigm is presented. A replacement theory of the policy process is still lacking. Thus, completely discarding the stages model ignores the organizational benefits it has provided. The stages approach has morphed over time. The various stages frameworks shown in Table 2.1 have helped to clarify the "how" of Lasswell's emphasis on "how policies are made and put into effect." Although the nominal conception of the stages of the model varies ever so slightly across researchers, there is a great deal of substantive commonality. Moreover, most process scholars agree that the stages model is a useful analytic tool for studying the policy process even if they differ over the labeling of the stages. Given such widespread agreement, any new model of the policy process will most likely retain some aspects of the stages approach.

The Lasswellian approach placed a strong emphasis on developing complex models capable of explaining the policy process, and the stages model represents one of the first comprehensive conceptual frameworks constructed with that goal in mind. Although critics argue that the stages approach provides little in terms of testable hypotheses, it does provide an organizing function for the study of public policy. The stages model has rationally divided labor within the field of public policy. Because of the stages approach, policy scholars know what to look for in the policy process, where it starts, and where it ends (at least temporarily). The "policy sciences" were first and foremost about bringing the scientific process into the study of public policy. Good theories simplify the phenomena they seek to explain. The policy process consists of numerous actors at different levels of government from different disciplinary backgrounds

with different training and different levels of knowledge on any given policy. These actors converge throughout the process, making decisions that affect future policy analyses. Yet despite such overwhelming complexity, the stages model provides a way for policy researchers to conceptualize the process of policymaking.

Thinking back to McCool's elements of good theory, the stages model actually does quite well. It is economical, it provides an organizing function, it is a heuristic, it is useful, it is reliable, it is objective, and it is powerful both in the sense of guiding the study of the policy process as well as the effect it has had on the field of public policy. What the researcher must decide is where simplification actually inhibits testability and predictability, and if so, whether to discard the theory or to make adjustments. For many scholars, the stages model has been discarded without any adjustments or a replacement.

Another "Theory" of Public Policy: Policy Typologies

The stages model conceives of public policy as the product of the linear progression of political events: Problems are put on the agenda, there is debate over potential solutions, legislatures adopt alternatives on the basis of practical or partisan favor, bureaucracies implement them, and some impact is felt on the real world. The stages model says nothing about what type of policies are being produced by this process, and what those differences might mean for politics.

Theodore Lowi, a political scientist, was interested in examining what types of policies were being produced by the policy process and what effect those policies had on politics. For Lowi, the question was: what is the output of the policy process, and what does that tell us about politics? Lowi was frustrated by what he perceived to be an inability or disinterest among policy scholars in distinguishing between types of outputs. Prior to Lowi's work, policy outputs were treated uniformly as an outcome of the political system. No attempt was made to determine if the process changed for different types of policies, let alone whether the types of policies determined specific political patterns. A single model of public policymaking was assumed to apply to all types of policy (Lowi 1970). Such overgeneralizations, argued Lowi, led to incomplete inferences

about the policy process, and more broadly about the relationship between public policy and politics.

Prior to Lowi's work, the relationship between politics and policy was assumed to be linear and casual; politics determine policies. Lowi (1972, 299), however, argued for the reverse, that "policies determine politics." At a very basic level, public policy is an attempt to influence individual behavior. As Lowi (1972, 299) wrote, "government coerces." However, when classified into general categories, such coercion allows for testable predictions about political behavior. By identifying the type of coercion, it would be possible to predict the type of politics that would follow. Lowi developed a 2 × 2 matrix of government coercion based on its target (individual versus environment) and likelihood of actually being employed (immediate versus remote) (1972, 300). Where the coercion is applicable to the individual, politics will be more decentralized; where coercion is applicable to the environment, politics will be more centralized. Where the likelihood of coercion is immediate, politics will be more conflictual with high levels of bargaining. Where the likelihood of coercion is more remote, politics will be less conflictual, with high levels of logrolling. As Lowi (1970, 320) observed, "each kind of coercion may very well be associated with a quite distinctive political process."

Lowi's basic argument was that if one could identify the type of policy under consideration—in other words, if one could classify a policy into a particular cell in his 2 × 2 table—one could predict the type of politics likely to follow. As others have argued (see Kellow 1988), Lowi's model is theoretically similar to the work of E. E. Schattschneider (1965). For Schattschneider, policy and politics are interrelated. How a policy is defined has the potential to "expand the scope of conflict," bringing more groups of people into the policy process, thus shaping politics. Lowi observed that certain types of policy tend to mobilize political actors in predictable patterns. Policies are assumed to fit neatly within one of four boxes of coercion, each generating distinct predictions about the type of politics. By classifying a particular policy as falling into one of these four categories, it would be possible to predict the resulting politics.

Lowi used his table to create a typology that put all policies into one of four categories: distributive policy, regulative policy, redistributive policy, and constituent policy. Table 2.2 provides an adapted model of Lowi's (1972, 300) policy typology framework. The policies and resulting politics

in Table 2.2 are based on Lowi's observations about federal-level policies from the 1930s through the 1950s. Looking across the rows in Table 2.2, one can see that each policy provides a set of expectations about politics. Each policy category, Lowi (1972) argued, amounted to an "arena of power," and he saw policies as the predictable outcome of a regular sub-system of actors. Thus if one knows the policy type, it is possible to predict the nature of political interactions between actors in the subsystem. The expectations that policy actors have about policies determines the type of political relationships between actors (Lowi 1964). Lowi described his "scheme" in the following way:

1. The types of relationships to be found among people are determined by their expectations.
2. In politics, expectations are determined by governmental outputs or policies.
3. Therefore, a political relationship is determined by the type of policy at stake, so that for every policy there is likely to be a distinctive type of political relationship. (Lowi 1964, 688)

TABLE 2.2 **Lowi's Policy Typologies and Resulting Politics**

Policy Type	Likelihood of coercion/ Applicability of coercion	Type of politics	Congress	President
Distributive	Remote/ Individual	Consensual Stable Logrolling	Strong Little floor activity	Weak
Constituent	Remote/ Environment	Consensual Stable Logrolling	N/A	N/A
Regulatory	Immediate/ Individual	Conflictual Unstable Bargaining	Strong High floor activity	Moderate
Redistributive	Immediate/ Environment	Stable Bargaining	Moderate Moderate floor activity	Strong

Note: Table is adapted from Lowi (1972: 300, 304–306)

Distributive policies are characterized by an ability to distribute bene-
fits and costs on an individual basis. As Lowi (1964, 690) wrote, "the in-
dulged and deprived, the loser and the recipient, need never come into
direct confrontation." Lowi cited tariffs, patronage policies, and tradi-
tional "pork barrel" programs as primary examples of distributive policy.
Because coercion is more remote with distributive policies, the politics
tend to be relatively consensual. As Lowi noted, the costs of such policies
are spread evenly across the population and as such lead to logrolling and
agreement between the president and the Congress. The Congress tends
to dominate the process, with the president often serving a relatively pas-
sive role.

Redistributive policies, unlike distributive policies, target a broader
group of people. These policies, such as welfare, Social Security, Medicare,
Medicaid, and even income tax, determine the "haves and have-nots"
(Lowi (1964, 691). The politics of redistributive policies tend to be more
active than distributive policies, resulting in more floor activity than dis-
tributive policies, with the president taking a slightly stronger role than
Congress. Redistributive politics are also characterized by a high level of
bargaining between large groups of people. Although such bargaining is
relatively consensual, because it takes place between larger groups of peo-
ple than with distributive policies, there is a greater potential for conflict.

Regulatory policies are policies aimed at directly influencing the be-
havior of a specific individual or group of individuals through the use of
sanctions or incentives. The purpose of regulatory policies is to increase
the costs of violating public laws. Examples include policies regulating
market competition, prohibiting unfair labor practices, and ensuring
workplace safety (Lowi 1972, 300). Regulatory policies, because the likeli-
hood of coercion is more immediate and applicable to the individual,
tend to result in more conflictual politics than either distributive or redis-
tributive policies. These policies also tend to be characterized by a high
level of bargaining and floor activity, resulting in a high number of
amendments (Lowi 1972, 306). As would be expected, groups tend to ar-
gue over who should be the target and incur the costs of government co-
ercion. The result is more "unstable" or combative and divisive politics
than is typically observed with distributive or redistributive policies.
Commenting on the history of public policy in the United States, Lowi
argued that these classifications follow a linear pattern; distributive

policies dominated the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, followed by an increase in regulatory policies as a result of the rise in business and labor, followed by an increase in redistributive policies as a result of the Great Depression and the inability of state governments to cope with national crises.

Lowi's fourth category, constituent policy, is considerably less clear than the other three classifications. It was not considered at all in his original typology formulation (1964), but is included in subsequent work to fill in the empty fourth cell (Lowi 1970, 1972). Lowi provides no empirical evidence regarding the role of Congress and the president in debating constituent policy. As such, we leave these boxes blank in Table 2.2. However, from the examples Lowi (1972, 300) uses (reapportionment, setting up a new agency, and propaganda), and the applicability and likelihood of coercion, we are left to assume that such policies are low salience and result in consensual politics. Little has been done to clarify constituent policies; they seem to cover a miscellaneous category that includes everything not in the original three classifications.

The typology framework was an attempt to redefine how policy and political scientists conceptualize the process of policymaking. Moreover, it was a bold attempt to put the discipline of public policy at the forefront of the study of politics. The typology framework posited that politics can only really be understood from the perspective of public policy. Lowi was frustrated by what he perceived as two general problems with existing research: 1) that the study of public policy to that point treated policy outputs uniformly, with no effort to distinguish between types of policy; and 2) a general acceptance among policy and political scientists that the president dominated the political process. The typology framework suggests otherwise on both fronts. In fact, it is only with redistributive policies that the president tends to have a stronger role than the Congress; Lowi further argued that the role of the president is conditional on whether the president is "strong" or "weak" (1972, 308).

Lowi's typology framework was also a departure from the Lasswellian approach to public policy. In fact, the notion that "policies determine politics" turns the "policy sciences for democracy" argument on its head. Instead of studying public policy to improve the political system, public policy should be studied because it will help to predict the type of politics displayed in the political system. The normative aspect in the Lasswellian approach, however, is not completely absent. Rather, Lowi argued that the

ability to predict the type of politics given a particular policy should give policy and political scientists a framework for determining what type of policies will succeed and what type will fail. As Lowi (1972, 308) wrote, this "reaches to the very foundation of democratic politics and the public interest." In other words, policy typologies contribute to the policy sciences by providing an additional method for improving public policy.

Typologies as Non–Mutually Exclusive Categories

If politics is a function of policy type, then classifying policies is crucial for making accurate inferences about politics. For any classification to be useful, the categories must be inclusive and mutually exclusive (McCool 1995b, 174–175). If policies can be objectively classified in such a fashion, then Lowi's notion of policy typologies becomes a testable theory of politics. If it is correct, then specific patterns of political behavior and predictable power relationships should be observed to vary systematically across different policy types. This turned out to be the big weakness of the framework: the key independent variable (policy type) needs to be clearly operationalized to have a useful and predictive model of politics. For Lowi, policy classification was easy. If a policy distributes costs broadly, with controllable benefits, it is most likely distributive. If coercion is directed at specific individuals, it is regulative. If it distributes benefits broadly across social groups, it is redistributive. Most policies, however, do not fit neatly within a single category. This critique has plagued the typology framework since its inception.

Greenberg and others (1977) provided the most systematic and sharpest critique of the typology framework. Because Lowi gave scant attention to the actual classification of each policy type, Greenberg and colleagues argued that his framework was doomed from the start. Take, for example, a bill proposing to increase the sales tax on cigarettes. At face value, this is clearly a regulatory policy. But if the added revenue from the tax goes toward healthcare or public education, then it becomes a redistributive policy. A higher tax on cigarettes is also meant to reduce the number of smokers in the general population as well as the effects of secondhand smoke. From this perspective, the bill is a public health issue and would most likely result in relatively consensual politics—the type of politics associated with distributive and constituent policies. This is not

an unexceptional case; most policies can be reasonably argued to fit into more than one category. Yet from Lowi's framework, we see widely varying predictions regarding the type of politics surrounding such a bill. This creates a fundamental problem for formulating falsifiable hypotheses. What type of politics can we expect from [fill in the blank] bill? is that it depends on whom you ask. In the example provided here, Lowi's model gives us three different outcomes. The point is that without a clear set of criteria for identifying policies, the typology framework is of little use (see also Kjellberg 1977).

If policy actors come to different conclusions about the type of policy under consideration, predicting politics becomes difficult if not impossible. To account for such complexity, some scholars have advocated the use of non-positivist methodology. Implicit in Greenberg et al.'s (1977) argument is a call for a diverse methodological approach to public policy. For this group of authors, Lowi's model is too simplistic; it ignores the complexity of the policy process, namely that multiple actors will tend to view a particular policy through multiple lenses. As a way around this dilemma, Greenberg and others argued that policy scholars should view public policy as a continuous process with multiple outputs, and that predicting politics depends on what output is being studied. Policy should be broken down into smaller units or key decisions, what Greenberg et al. label "points of first significant controversy" and "point of last significant controversy" (1977, 1542). Both provide focal points for policy researchers, the latter of which is useful for classifying policy type.

Steinberger (1980) agreed with Greenberg et al. (1977) about the need for accounting for multiple participants, but took it a step further by suggesting that positivist methodology is simply inadequate to deal with the subjectivity of the policy process. Instead, a phenomenological approach is required. Policy actors attach different meanings to policy proposals according to their own beliefs, values, norms, and life experiences. To account for such variation requires a more intersubjective or constructivist approach to the study of public policy. For Steinberger, this requires accounting for the multiple dimensions of policy, namely substantive impact, political impact, scope of impact, exhaustibility, and tangibility. Presumably, such dimensions are regularly assessed by policy analysts. But at the heart of the phenomenological approach is the notion that each person has a different set of values. Thus, while those dimensions may in fact be the dimensions along which people attach meaning to pol-

icy, some dimensions may be more valued than others. Complicating Steinberger's argument is the expansion of categories of public policy from three in Lowi's model to eleven. Policies can be categorized as falling into one or more categories with crosscutting dimensions. Although this expands the realm of classification, it does little in terms of providing a parsimonious model of policy classification; indeed, it moves the whole typology project out of the rationalist framework and pushes it into post-positivist territory where subjective perception takes precedence over a single objective reality.[1] In fact, Steinberger admitted that "the range of possibilities is obviously enormous" (193). It also means prediction becomes a post-hoc exercise, possible only when we know how specific actors subjectively classify a particular policy proposal.

That policy actors potentially view the same bill differently presents a serious problem for the typology framework. Whereas Greenberg et al. and Steinberger are right to argue that multiple actors will tend to have varying expectations about a single policy proposal, their solutions muddy the waters of policy analysis. If Steinberger's model were adopted, this would complicate the tasks of the traditional, rationalist policy analyst. In addition to assessing the substantive, cost-benefit impact of public policy, policy analysts would now also play the role of policy psychologist. Not only does this present a problem in terms of identifying the key independent variable in Lowi's model, but it also raises doubts about whether objective empirical research on policy classification is even possible.

Debate over the utility of Lowi's model came to a head in the late 1980s. A series of articles published in *Policy Studies Journal* demonstrated the enormity of this debate. Working within the Lowi's framework, Spitzer (1987) saw a way out the problems documented by Greenberg et al. (1977) and others. Rather than adding typologies, Spitzer revised existing typologies. Spitzer, like others, recognized that many policies do not fit neatly within one of Lowi's four categories. To accommodate such cases, Spitzer placed a diagonal line through each policy typology to distinguish between "pure" and "mixed" cases. Pure cases were those that fit clearly within Lowi's original framework, whereas mixed cases were those that generally followed the pattern described by Lowi but also shared characteristics of other types of policy. The result was ten categories of public policy.[2]

Spitzer's article provoked a sharp reply from Kellow (1988). For Kellow, the distinguishing trait of good theory is simplicity. Spitzer's model

added unneeded complexity to Lowi's original framework. As Kellow wrote, "the simpler and more powerful the theory the better" (1988, 714). Rather than adding categories, Kellow revised Lowi's model in accordance with work by James Q. Wilson (1973b, Chapter 16). Rather than defining policy types according to the likelihood and applicability of coercion, policy types were defined according to the distribution of costs and benefits. Regulatory policy was divided into public and private interest regulatory policy, and constituent policy was dropped in Kellow's revisions.[3] Simplification was critical to preventing "an infinite parade of subcategories" (Kellow 1988, 722).

The problems with Lowi's original typology are numerous and have been well documented: it is not testable, it is not predictive, it is too simplistic—the categories are not mutually exclusive, it is post hoc, it does not provide causal explanation, and it does not account for the dynamic aspect of the policy process. The difference between Greenberg and colleagues, Steinberger, Spitzer, and others who question Lowi's typology (see Kjellberg 1977; Kellow 1988) tend to revolve around the inclusiveness of Lowi's model. Is the model too simplistic? Should future researchers work around or within the original four typologies? Sharp disagreement over these questions also prompted an important exchange between Kellow and Spitzer. Rather than continuing to press the criterion for classification, however, the debate appears to have settled on the question of epistemology. Spitzer (1989) advocates for a Kuhnian and inductive approach to policy studies. The "tough" cases ignored by Kellow are critical to the theory-building process (532). Spitzer (1989) further criticizes Kellow on the grounds that his theory is not a theory at all but rather a tautological attempt to preserve Lowi's original framework. If, as Kellow observed, policy proposals determine politics, but political actors can manipulate the expectations surrounding policy proposals, then does it not follow that policy proposals determine politics, which determine policy proposals? For Kellow (1989), the tough cases cited by Spitzer and others as creating problems for models of policy classification do not warrant a revision of the theory. In fact, Kellow is skeptical of the inductive and behavioralist approach he attributes to Spitzer. Lowi's model provides a theory, a frame of reference for looking for supporting observations. Cases that do not fit neatly within one of Lowi's four categories simply represent limitations of the model; they do not warrant a paradigm shift.

This leaves policy studies in a bit of a dilemma. Did Lowi give policy studies a new paradigm from which to view the relationship between policy and politics? Or, because his model fails the classic Popperian test of falsifiability, is the typology framework useless? Many have come to the latter conclusion, consigning policy typologies into the same category as the stages model. It is a handy way to impose order on a complex topic, a good heuristic for compactly conveying information in the classroom and on the page, but it's not really an explanatory framework that is going to advance the field. Yet the typology framework does contain some attributes of good policy theory.

Public policy is often criticized for being devoid of generalizable and "ambitious" theory (Hill 1997). It is hard to make that claim for the typology framework, which was nothing if not bold. The proposition that "policies determine politics" essentially renders the study of politics a subfield of public policy. In many ways, the typology framework is a victim of its own ambition. On the one hand, it was an attempt to redefine the relationship between politics and policy. On the other hand, it was an attempt to introduce an important but overlooked independent variable in the study of public policy. Lowi's typology framework also fits with Lasswell's emphasis on developing testable "models" about public policy. The typology framework essentially gives us four different models about the relationship between policy and politics. By Lowi's (1972, 299) own admission, "Finding different manifestations or types of a given phenomena is the beginning of orderly control and prediction." Policy typologies give us a distinct set of "variables" for testing theories about the policy process (Lowi 1972, 299). Given a type of policy, we can make predictions about the type of politics that are likely to ensue. If such predictions do not hold up to rigorous testing, that provides a cue that a paradigm shift is warranted or at least can be expected. A null hypothesis that fails to be disproven still contributes to scientific knowledge.

Ultimately, if the methodological issues surrounding policy classification are solved—and we recognize that is a big "if"—the generalizability of the framework is still possible. Lowi's framework did not fail because its first principles did not fit together logically nor because it was empirically falsified; it has been kept in suspended animation because no one has figured out how to objectively and empirically classify policies into different types. If that problem can be overcome, the framework may yet prove to be a new paradigm for understanding politics. Most are rightly

skeptical about objective classification, though there are still periodic attempts to do so, and they have been met with at least some success (Smith 2002). There is still potential for progress in this area.

Even if typologies never overcome this problem, however, the general framework has still made a contribution comparable to the stages model. It provides a workable frame of reference for studying public policy and has influenced generations of policy scholarship, but it contains many problems.

Where Do We Go from Here?

Does the field of public policy have a unifying theoretical framework? The answer is no. Has the field attempted to create such unifying frameworks? The answer is yes. The stages model and policy typologies, for all their inherent flaws, do provide a broad conceptualization of public policy and what public policy scholars should be doing. Most policy scholars view these frameworks more as historical artifacts than theoretical tools to guide research, and with some justification. The last major evolution of the stages model came with Ripley in 1985. Although more journal space has been devoted to criticizing the typology framework, the last major attempt at revision came with the sharp exchange between Spitzer and Kellow in 1989, and Smith's (2002) call to shift to a taxonomic (as opposed to typological) approach to policy classification. The typology framework and stages model both provide a way of organizing the field (one regarding policy process, the other regarding policy outputs), but there are important flaws in each. Such flaws, such as causality, testability, falsifiability, predictability, and others documented in this chapter, are fodder for theory-building within each framework. Attempts at revisions of both theories, however, appear to have stalled. Does this mean both theories are irrelevant?

The answer, like most in the social sciences, is "it depends." Most policy theories, including Lowi's typologies and the stages heuristic, fall short of scientific theory or are inadequate in ways that prevent systematic testing (Sabatier 2007). For the typology framework, the problem lies with the operationalization of the key independent variable. For the stage heuristic, the problem lies in the fact that it presents an untestable and non-falsifiable model. Greenberg et al. (1977, 1543) conclude that policy theory "should

be parsimonious to be sure, but not oversimplified." Both the stages heuristic and policy typologies appear to have fallen into the trap of over-simplifying the policy process at the expense of rigorous scientific theory. The stages approach ignores institutions and critical individual actors such as policy specialists and advocacy groups, as well as systemic charac-teristics such as political feasibility, all of which can affect the policy process in varying ways. All are assumed to be static in the stages model. Policy typologies ignore the complexity of policy content as well as the fact that the causal arrow can flow in both directions. That is, political ac-tors may attempt to shape the content of public policy as a way to shape the ensuing political debate. Both the stages model and policy typologies also fall short of the Lasswellian call for improving the quality of public policy. The stages model is simply a descriptive model of the policy process, and despite Lowi's claim, the typology framework does not give us any sense as to how to improve policy outputs. Good policy research includes substantive policy information that can potentially be used by policy practitioners (Sabatier 1991b). Neither the stages model nor the typology framework does this.

Even though both theories have serious limitations, both theories are also useful in terms of laying the groundwork for what good public policy theories should look like. The paradox of the stages model is that while most scholars argue it lacks testable hypotheses, most scholars also agree on the basic framework: problems must come to the attention of govern-ment before they can be addressed, alternatives are debated and the best option is selected and then implemented, with the implemented policy being subject to evaluation and revision. The same holds for the typology framework. Whereas critics of Lowi argue that most policies do not fit neatly within one of his three categories, they do agree that most policies share characteristics of these original categories. Moreover, policies that are "pure" cases do tend to be characterized by the politics predicted in Lowi's original model (Spitzer 1987). The utility of the stages model and typology framework is that they both show what not to do while also contributing to the field of policy studies. The number of books and jour-nal pages devoted to both topics are testament to their effect on the field.

The real dilemma for policy theory is whether it should be held to the same standards as theory in the natural or hard sciences. Paul Sabatier has written extensively on the need for "better theories" of public policy. For Sabatier (2007), the path to better theories is most likely to be characterized

by a mix of inductive and deductive approaches. Policy theories should be broad in scope and attempt to develop causal relationships. Following Lowi, critics regularly chastised the simplicity of the typology framework on the grounds that it led to an incomplete and untestable model of politics. Revisions called for expanding the number of categories and adopting post-positivist methodology. Although such models were more perhaps more inclusive, they did little to organize our understanding of policy classification. Lowi (1988, 725) himself wrote that his original typology framework outlined in his 1964 book review should be viewed "not for what it accomplished but for what started." The complexity of the policy process as well as policy content most likely means that any theory of public policy will continually be subject to revision. This is not meant to detract from the quality of such theories, it is simply recognition of the nature of the unit of analysis.

Notes

1. This sort of post-positivist approach has been used to construct some useful alternate typologies of politics and public policy. See, for example, Schneider and Ingram 1997, 109.

2. Ten rather than eight because regulatory policy is further subdivided between economic and social regulation, resulting in four types of regulative policy.

3. Policy with widely distributed costs and benefits was labeled redistributive policy; policy with widely dispersed costs and narrow benefits was labeled distributive; policy with narrow costs and widely dispersed benefits was labeled public interest regulatory; and policy with narrow costs and narrow benefits was labeled private interest regulatory (Kellow 1988, 718).