Policy Subsystem Configurations and Policy Change: Operationalizing the Postpositivist Analysis of the Politics of the Policy Process

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Over the past two decades thinking about the role of politics in the policy process has taken several different shapes. Analysts in the "positivist" school of policy analysis have tended to use restricted notions of politics in their search for policy determinants or causes of policy change. This approach can be contrasted usefully with "postpositivist" analyses, which emphasize the role played by policy discourses in the policy process. This article discusses the manner in which policy networks and policy communities integrate ideas and interests in public policymaking and provide an opportunity to overcome the positivist/post-positivist conceptual dichotomy. It proposes a model setting out how different subsystem configurations relate to paradigmatic and intraparadigmatic processes of policy change. The paper suggests that the identification of the nature of the policy subsystem in a given policy sector reveals a great deal about its propensity to respond to changes in ideas and interests and is therefore a good indicator of the likely effect "politics," in either the restrictive or broad sense of the term, will have on policymaking.

The role of politics in the policy process remains a subject of much interest and contention within the policy sciences. At least part of this debate stems from the different uses to which the term "politics" is put. For some, politics refers to any element in the policy process not purely "rational" or technical in nature and therefore subject to conflicting interpretations. It can extend from conflicts between self-interested parties over particular policy proposals to more generalized ideological debates between competing *weltanschauungs*, or worldviews. For others, the term is used to refer only to the interaction of organized, and self-proclaimed, political entities in the policy process.

This latter, restrictive, interpretation has been the subject of much research and commentary (Castles, 1979, 1982; King, 1981; Rose, 1980; von Beyme, 1984). Findings concerning the role of parties in public policymaking, for example, have included evidence that governments led by social democratic and Christian democratic parties have been related positively to the development of welfare state programs (Castles & Merrill, 1989; Wilensky, 1975) and to different fiscal policy orientations (Blais, Blake, & Dion, 1993, 1996; Erikson, Wright, & McIver, 1989; Hibbs, 1977). However, the significance of parties has been challenged by those who argue that their influence is negated by international linkages that overcome many political elements of domestic origin (Cameron, 1978) and varies directly with other elements of the political regime found in the jurisdiction concerned (Castles, 1981; Schmidt, 1996). Similarly, others argue that government has become too complex for influence by partisan generalists, with day-to-day influence stemming more from policy specialists in government

and from those in the employ of interest groups and specialized policy research institutes (Castles & McKinlay, 1997; Michaels, 1992; Pross, 1992).

The fact that the influence of parties may be less than what is suggested by some, or that their influence may be waning, however, does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that "politics doesn't matter." Rather, it may suggest only that the definition of "politics" used in the analysis was too narrow and that the second possibility set out above—that the overall conceptions or sets of ideas held by policymakers contain an inherently "political" element that affects policy outcomes—should be used.[1]

Positivist and Postpositivist Visions of the Role of Political Actors in the Policy Process

The central problem in understanding the role of politics in the policy process is to comprehend how demands for a policy arise and are articulated by policy actors (Spector & Kitsuse, 1987, pp. 75–76). Depending on their fundamental epistemological or ontological premises, some analysts have attributed great importance to the actions and behavior of specific actors in affecting policy, while others have argued that actors and their behavior make very little difference to policy outcomes (Castles, 1981).

This latter view was held by most early, "positivist" analyses of public policymaking. Adherents of most functional social theories who applied these theories to the study of policy processes and outcomes, for example, often based their analyses on some form of determinism—economic, technological, geographic, or otherwise (Aaron, 1967; Cutright, 1965; Pryor, 1968; see also Sharkansky, 1971).[2] The significant differences that were found to exist between policies and policymaking in otherwise similar countries, however, soon led to efforts to reintegrate political variables with larger socioeconomic or demographic ones (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Heidenheimer, Heclo, & Adams, 1975, pp. 257–284; Hewitt, 1977; Korpi, 1983; Miller, 1976).[3] Some analysts argued that political variables operated within the context of a larger set of "environmental" variables that conditioned and constrained their influence,[4] while others argued that political variables coexisted alongside social, and especially economic, ones and together influenced policy outcomes.[5]

Approaches highlighting multiple political, economic, social, ideological, and/or institutional policy determinants remained largely pretheoretical. Such models pointed to potentially significant sets of variables affecting policymaking, but did not specify how each is to be weighed in particular policymaking circumstances. While some analysts continued to make efforts within this general framework to clarify the relationships between political and nonpolitical variables, there were others who described this entire project as futile and called for a move away from efforts to describe the "objective" conditions that "cause" policy.

The essence of more recent *"postpositivist"* (Fischer & Forester, 1993; Stone, 1989; Torgerson, 1996) approaches to the study of policymaking is a focus on the way in which the language of politics "constructs" public policy, since the language of politics is inscribed with interpretations of what a policy "problem" is (Danziger, 1995; Roe, 1994; Throgmorton, 1991). As Murray Edelman (1988, pp. 12–13) argues:

Problems come into discourse and therefore into existence as
reinforcements of ideologies, not simply because they are there or
because they are important for well-being. They signify who are
virtuous and useful and who are dangerous and inadequate, which actions
will be rewarded and which penalized. They constitute people as
subjects with particular kinds of aspirations, self-concepts, and fears,
and they create beliefs about the relative importance of events and
objects. They are critical in determining who exercise authority and
who accept it. They construct areas of immunity from concern because
those areas are not seen as problems. Like leaders and enemies, they
define the contours of the social world, not in the same way for
everyone, but in the light of the diverse situations from which people
respond to the political spectacle.

Instead of viewing policies as a result of the conjuncture of certain
"objective" economic, geographic, technological, or demographic "causal"
variables, in the postpositivistic view the "problems" that governments "resolve"
are considered to be constructed in the realm of contested public and private
discourses (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1981; Rochefort & Cobb, 1993; Spector &
Kitsuse, 1987).[6] As such, policymaking is viewed as a process that cannot be
"determined" in the traditional positivist sense. Instead, policy is thought of as
being established out of the contestation and fermentation of the history,
traditions, attitudes, and beliefs of people encapsulated and codified in the terms of
alternate policy discourses.[7]

This is quite a different view of the politics of the policy process from
that typical of earlier works. However, for the most part, existing postpositivist
analyses have been pitched at the level of metatheoretical critique and have had
little to say about exactly how very broadly defined political variables are to be
incorporated into the analysis of specific policy processes and how, outside of very
broad generalizations, policy ideas affect policy outcomes and policy change.[8]
Nevertheless, as we shall argue below, the elements of an operationalizable
postpositivist model of the politics of policymaking and policy change can be
gleaned from recent studies on the nature of policy subsystems and the role they
play in the policy process (Daneke, 1992; Hendrick & Nachmias, 1992; Sabatier
& Jenkins-Smith, 1993).

Policy Subsystems and Policy Change

An important element of postpositivist policy analyses is their emphasis
on the manner in which political actors group together in the form of "discourse
coalitions" (Fischer, 1993; Hajer, 1993). This happens, for example, when
members of interest groups, administrators, politicians, journalists, academics, and
others argue or make policy-relevant statements with much the same content and
purpose. Although the exact contours of such coalitions are not specified in the
postpositivist literature, they appear to be virtually indistinguishable from the
policy subsystems identified in the more empirically based comparative and
structural network policy analyses of the 1980s and 1990s (Burstein, 1991; Heinz,
Laumann, Salisbury, & Nelson, 1990; Knoke, 1987, 1993; Knoke & Pappi,
1996; Laumann & Knoke, 1987; Rhodes, 1984).[9]

The main thrust of the policy subsystems literature is its effort to derive
a conception of relevant policy actors that transcends traditional "positivist"

distinctions between agents and structures, and especially between institutionally defined "state" and "societal" actors (Smith, 1993). A major element of the conception of policy subsystems involves viewing them as being composed of two subsets of all the actors present in the policy "universe." The larger set of actors is composed of those who have some knowledge of the policy issue in question and who collectively construct a policy discourse within a "policy community" (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993).[10] A subset within larger, knowledge-based policy communities is composed of those who participate in relationships with each other to further their own ends or interests (Wilks & Wright, 1987). Here, for example, academics, journalists, and others active in policy communities may be excluded from policy networks in which a small set of actors—such as business and government—may interact on a regular basis affecting day-to-day policymaking.

The main advantage of distinguishing between policy networks and policy communities lies in the manner in which it integrates the analysis of two different sets of motivations guiding the actions of those involved in policy formulation: *knowledge* (or expertise) and *interest* (Torgerson, 1986). By associating a policy community with a specific knowledge base and a policy network with actors interacting in the pursuit of their interests, two different aspects of subsystem activity come into sharper focus.

That subsystems might play a significant role in the process of policy change has been hinted at by several authors (cf. Rhodes & Marsh, 1992). Beginning from the observation that the process of agenda setting involves discussion, debate, and persuasion among policymakers who present a variety of evidence and argument in support of their position (Majone, 1989), Baumgartner and Jones (1991, 1993, 1994), for example, have developed a model of agenda setting in which policy actors compete with each other to affect or alter the "image" of a policy because of the way the image can influence membership in relevant policy subsystems. Sabatier also has suggested that significant changes in policy outcomes occur ultimately due to shifts in subsystem membership. The nature of the policy subsystem responsible for policy formulation is an important element in Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith's analysis of policy change, as coalition members mediate the exchange of interests and ideas in public policymaking. Although they focus their analysis on "external perturbations" such as elections, wars, accidents, or crises that can disrupt established subsystems, Sabatier and his colleagues recognize that internal subsystem behavior must be such that the opportunities presented by external "shocks" lead to internal change.[11] External changes affect the resources—"money, expertise, number of supporters, and legal authority" (Sabatier, 1987)—available to subsystem members and thereby lead to alterations in their behavior and in policy outcomes (Jenkins-Smith, St. Clair, & Woods, 1991).

Types of Policy Subsystems, Types of Policy Change, and Their Relationship

Such insights into the links between policy actors and policy change help to operationalize the postpositivist theory of the politics of the policy process. They offer valuable suggestions about the manner in which key policy actors are linked to policy formation and the way policy outcomes are affected by changes in subsystem behavior. To develop these insights further and understand the role

played by politics "writ-large" in the policy process, however, it is necessary to distinguish between the principal types of policy subsystems and the different processes of policy change, and to note the different roles that subsystems play in each process.

Types of Policy Subsystems

Numerous different models of policy networks have now been described in the policy literature. They focus on a variety of factors related to the composition of policy subsystems, including, among others, the nature of their membership, their degree of "integration," the manner in which their membership is "open" or "closed," and the nature of the resources they have at their disposal (Jordan & Schubert, 1992; Van Waarden, 1992). Two key variables that many observers have argued affect the structure and behavior of policy networks, however, are the number and type of their membership and whether state or societal members dominate their activities and interactions. Using these variables, a reasonable classification of networks can be developed (see Table 1).[12]

Table 1
A Taxonomy of Policy Networks

Dominant Actors	Number of Members	
	Few	**Many**
State	Bureaucratic, Clientele, or Corporatist Networks	Pluralist Networks
Societal	Participatory-Statist, Captured, or Triadic Networks	Issue Networks

Source: Adapted from Howlett and Ramesh (1995).

In this model, small networks dominated by government actors—such as are found commonly in highly technical issue areas such as chemical or toxic substance regulation—can be distinguished from those in which many societal actors are included, such as might be the case with education or social policymaking. Other distinct network types exist in which societal actors dominate a small network—as in many areas of industrial policy—or where state actors dominate large networks, as is the case in many countries in areas such as transportation or health.

Much less work has been done on the classification of policy communities, but it is apparent that the significant variables affecting community membership are related to knowledge and information. Especially critical in this regard are the number of relatively distinct "idea sets" that exist in the community, and whether, and to what extent, a consensus exists on any particular set (Haas, 1992; MacRae, 1993; Schulman, 1988; Smith, 1993) (see Table 2).[13]

In a situation where one idea set is dominant and unchallenged—such as often is the case for extended periods of time in an area such as fiscal policy—a form of monopolistic or hegemonic community may develop. On the other hand, where multiple sets of ideas circulate with no single idea set dominating any other— as exists in many countries in areas such as environmental protection and resource use—a more chaotic situation exists. Where several major idea sets exist and contest dominance, a third type of contested community may form, such as is the case with aboriginal or communications policy in many countries and jurisdictions. Finally, where one idea set is dominant but faces challenges from less popular ideas, a fractious community is likely to be found. This is a type of community often found in the cultural policy area.

Table 2
A Taxonomy of Policy Communities

Dominant Idea Set	Number of Idea Sets	
	Few	**Many**
Yes	Hegemonic	Fractious
No	Contested	Chaotic

Source: Adapted from Hessing and Howlett (1997).

Types of Policy Change

As Keith Dowding (1995) has argued, these taxonomies are useful in more than a descriptive sense only if they can be tied to specific patterns or propensities for policy change. In this effort, it is important to note that many observers have remarked upon the fact that most policies made by governments are, for the most part and most of the time, in some way a continuation of past policies and practices. Even what commonly are portrayed as "new" policy initiatives often simply are variations on existing practices (Polsby, 1984). In normal circumstances a policy problem or issue will be dealt with by reference to an existing practice, or in what has been described by many as an "incremental" fashion (Hayes, 1992; Lindblom, 1959). This pattern of piecemeal policy change is the stuff of "normal" policymaking.

A second pattern of policy change is more dramatic, though infrequent, and represents a major reconceptualization and restructuring of policy. This type of policy change is described as "paradigmatic" (Hall, 1990; Kuhn, 1962, 1974; Masterman, 1970).[14] Paradigmatic change is seen as involving periods of stability and incremental adaptations interspersed by periods of revolutionary upheaval, or what often has been referred to as a "punctuated equilibrium" pattern (Eldredge & Gould, 1972; Gersick, 1991; Hernes, 1976).

A useful way to look at different types of policy change has been suggested by Durrant and Diehl (1989). Analogizing from work in paleobiology, they have argued that policy change has two components: Policies can vary not only in terms of the mode of change—between the normal pattern of piecemeal

incremental change and the pattern of paradigmatic chance described above—but also in terms of the tempo or speed of change (see Table 3).

As this model demonstrates, paradigmatic change, although infrequent, can be either rapid[15] (Hall, 1989, 1993) or slow. The same is true for the normal pattern of incremental change, which can occur at either tempo. Empirical evidence of such processes has been generated in diverse areas such as fiscal policy, agricultural policy, aboriginal policy, and forestry policy, among others (Coleman, Skogstad, & Atkinson, 1996; Hall, 1992; Howlett, 1994; Lertzman, Rayner, & Wilson, 1996).

Table 3
A Taxonomy of Policy Change

Mode of Change	Speed of Change	
	Fast	**Slow**
Paradigmatic	Rapid Paradigmatic	Gradual Paradigmatic
Normal	Rapid Incremental	Gradual Incremental

Source: Adapted from Durrant and Diehl (1989).

Types of Policy Subsystems and Types of Policy Change

As was suggested above, the predominance of a "normal" pattern of relatively gradual incremental policy change can be explained by the fact that the same set of actors are involved in the policy process over a long period of time (Hayes, 1992; Howlett & Ramesh, 1995).[16] In the course of interaction among themselves and in their day-to-day dealings with a public problem, members of policy subsystems tend to develop a common *episteme,* or paradigm (Haas, 1992; Kenis, 1991). While adaptation and adjustment of their views on the basis of their experience and new information is endemic to the policy process, their understanding of the nature of public problems and the acceptable or feasible solutions to them often are remarkably durable. The common understanding obtained in a policy subsystem can break down at times, however, setting the stage for the emergence of new and different policy discourses.

The reasons behind the infrequency of paradigmatic policy change—whether rapid or gradual—are less well understood. A strong trend in the policy literature has been to discuss paradigmatic policy change as a result of the buildup of anomalies between the paradigm and the reality it claims to describe. Change is said to be precipitated by innovative individuals—"policy entrepreneurs"—who respond to the changed circumstances and to their own career ambitions by introducing new ideas into the policy milieu (Ashford, 1997; Kingdon, 1984; Stewart, 1992). This vision tends to treat paradigm change as a straightforward process that results automatically once anomalies have accumulated. However, this neglects the role played by entrenched actors in resisting change, a

phenomenon of only minor importance in the sciences but of critical import in policymaking (Hoberg, 1996; Weir, 1992).

A better explanation of paradigmatic policy change would highlight the role of both ideas and interests in this process (Hall, 1990).[17] That is, a change in the episteme, or knowledge base, for example, can result in either rapid or slow paradigmatic policy change depending on whether the second condition—a change in key actors/interests—is also present. Without a change in ideas, policy change will be incremental, but with its tempo determined by whether or not new actors or interests have been introduced. In this view, "ideational" conflict in policy communities is only one source of change that must be coupled with changes in actors in policy networks for rapid, fundamental change in policy to occur (Hall, 1993; Hayward, 1991; Schulman, 1988).

Recent empirical work on subsystem structures has revealed that some policy subsystems facilitate knowledge exchange and the introduction of new actors and interests, while others impede this process (Coleman & Skogstad, 1995; Daugbjerg, 1997; Zahariadis & Allen, 1995). Subsystems that are open to new actors and hospitable to fresh ideas, for example, are more likely to come up with rapid paradigmatic changes in policies than are those that are closed and inhospitable.

Table 4 provides a taxonomy of policy change related to the effects of changes in interests and ideas on policy paradigms. In this model, policy change will take either paradigmatic or incremental form depending on whether changes have occurred in dominant sets of ideas, while changes in actors or interests influence the rate, or tempo, of change.

Table 4
The Effects of Changes in Ideas and Interests on Policy Change

Changes in Ideas	Changes in Actors/Interests	
	Yes	No
Yes	Rapid Paradigmatic	Slow Paradigmatic
No	Rapid Instrumental	Slow Incremental

Elements of a Postpositivist Model

Understanding these relationships is critical to the successful operationalization of the postpositivist understanding of the role played by politics in the policy process, a move that can be accomplished by linking together the various types of policy subsystems with the types of policy change set out above. Towards this end, one dimension of policy subsystem structure that is important in affecting how and why policies change is their degree of "hospitableness" to new ideas and actors. This can be operationalized by examining the extent to which a policy network is insulated from influences and ideas originating in its

associated policy community. That is, the extent to which policy networks are capable of resisting new ideas that might arise in the policy community is a significant factor in understanding the relationship between the subsystem and policy change. The interests represented in a policy network may be set in their ways and/or benefit from the *status quo* and may have the resources to resist new ideas flowing from their associated policy community; such a situation is likely to stifle rapid or substantial change. Evidence of this relationship has been found in some studies of the health and natural resource sectors (Howlett & Rayner, 1995; Williams, Vayda, Cohen, Woodward, & Ferries, 1995; Wilson, 1987/88).

A second significant dimension relates to the openness of the subsystem to new actors, or the actual configuration of individuals and groups represented in networks and communities. This can be operationalized by examining the degree of "symmetry," or the extent of overlap of actors, existing between the network and the community. Although the absolute size of the subsystem is not an issue, the *relative* sizes of the community and network are significant. Whether or not a community is larger or essentially contiguous with the network affects the potential for new actors to access or join a network (Smith, 1993).

A reasonable expectation would be that *open subsystems* (with networks that are thinly insulated and asymmetrical with their policy communities), other things being equal, can be expected to be more likely to be affected by changes in ideas and interests than *closed subsystems,* whose networks are insulated and whose membership is virtually identical with their policy community. *Resistant subsystems*, whose networks are symmetrical with their policy communities and not insulated from them, are open to new ideas circulating in the community, but not to new actors or interests. *Contested subsystems* are asymmetrical and hence potentially open to new actors, but are well insulated and hence can resist new ideas.

Table 5 illustrates the four main subsystem configurations that correspond to these two dimensions of community-network interactions, their impact on the presence or absence of new actors or ideas, and their expected impact on policy change.

Table 5
Policy Subsystem Configurations Significant to Policy Change

Symmetry Between Community and Network	Network's Degree of Insulation From Community	
	High	**Low**
High	Closed Subsystem [gradual incremental change]	Resistant Subsystem [gradual paradigmatic change]
Low	Contested Subsystem [rapid incremental change]	Open Subsystem [rapid paradigmatic change]

Note: Text within brackets indicates the likely pattern of the resulting change.

In this model, the configuration of policy network and community within a policy subsystem is a significant determinant and predictor of the type and tempo of policy change. That is, a reasonable hypothesis for future empirical research would be that open subsystems are most likely to generate instances of rapid paradigmatic change, while closed subsystems are more likely to produce slow incremental change. Resistant subsystems would show a propensity toward gradual paradigmatic change, while contested subsystems would tend toward rapid incremental change.

Conclusion

This article has argued that postpositivist visions of the role played by political variables in the policy process have been poorly operationalized and remain, for the most part, at the level of very broad generalization. The paper argues that successful operationalization can be achieved by focusing on the results of recent research into the nature of policy subsystems and their relationship to policy change. The nature of the policy subsystem in a given policy sector, it is suggested, reveals a great deal about its propensity to respond to changes in ideas and actors, and is therefore a good indicator of both the nature ("normal" or "paradigmatic") and tempo ("gradual" or "rapid") of policy change likely to occur in that sector. As such, this empirical work can help to flesh out the missing elements of the postpositivist concept of public policymaking.

Typically, the same sets of policy actors are involved in setting agendas, defining policy options, choosing a particular option, implementing it, and evaluating its performance. The common understanding of a problem and solutions to it that develops from shared experiences, combined with the durability of subsystem members' interests, promote broad continuities in policies. They usually lead to small changes, constituting what we describe as "incremental" change. This type of change can be rapid or gradual, depending upon the presence or absence of new actors in the policy subsystem.

A paradigmatic policy change represents a significant, though not necessarily total, break from the past in terms of the overall policy goals, the understanding of public problems, the solutions to them, and the policy instruments used to put decisions into effect. Such deep changes occur rapidly in circumstances where new ideas can penetrate policy communities and new interests can penetrate the policy networks. In other circumstances, where only a shift in ideas occurs only slow paradigmatic change will result.

The relevance of subsystems to these patterns of policy change is linked to the manner in which the relationships between policy communities and policy networks in policy subsystems reconcile conflicts between ideas and interests in the policy process. While this is a multifaceted relationship, two dimensions of it—the degree of insulation of the network from "noninterest-related" actors and the extent of symmetry existing between communities and networks—are significant.

Reconceptualizing policy change in the light of these observations helps to bring order to a somewhat chaotic set of notions implicit in much of the existing literature on the subject of the role of politics in the policy process (Blyth, 1997; Dowding, 1995; Jacobsen, 1995; Lee, 1996; Marsh & Rhodes, 1992) and helps to foster a research agenda that can develop further insights into this crucial question facing policy studies (Baumgartner & Jones, 1994; Coleman,

1994; Grant & MacNamara, 1995; Jenkins-Smith et al., 1991; Richardson, Maloney, & Rudig, 1992).[18] More empirical work and testing no doubt will contribute to the continued development of this "postpositivist" perspective on the "politics of policy."

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Notes

[1] This is not a new insight, of course. See Berger and Luckmann (1966) and Holzner and Marx (1979) for a discussion of the history and origins of the "sociology of knowledge."

[2] Authors such as Philip Cutright (1965), Henry Aaron (1967), and Frederick Pryor (1968), for example, all developed the idea that the structure of a nation's economy determined the types of public policies its government would adopt. For a critique of the methodology used in these studies, see Sharkansky (1971).

[3] For a summary of the arguments in this vein, see Uusitalo (1984).

[4] Models based on the notion that policy-relevant variables exist within a *"funnel of causality"* are typical of this revised "positivist" approach. See Hofferbert (1974), King (1973), and Simeon (1976).

[5] The *political-business* cycle literature, for example, argues that the nature of government interventions in the economy and elsewhere can be predicted on the basis of the political ideology of the governing party, while the actual timing of interventions depends on proximity to elections. See Frey (1978), Locksley (1980), and Tufte (1978). For a critique of these models, see Schneider and Frey (1988).

[6] According to Michael Shapiro (1981, p. 231):

> Human conduct is controlled and understood within the discourses that give it meaning. Insofar as we do not invent language or meanings in our typical speech, we end up buying into a model of political relations in almost everything we say without making a prior, deliberative evaluation of the purchasing decision.

See also Goodin (1998).

[7] In its original formulation, the notion of a political discourse was set out as a tool for understanding the historical evolution of society (see Foucault, 1972). The task of discourse analysis, and of social theory in general, is seen as understanding the nature of the origin and evolution of discursive formations over time, and to situate current discourses into this overall conception of history (Woodiwiss, 1990).

[8] As Peter deLeon (1994, p. 206) has argued, "there are numerous operational obstacles that lay between the promise of post-positivism and its practice." See also Weimer (1998) and deLeon (1998).

[9] R. A. W. Rhodes (1984) argued throughout the early 1980s that interactions among various departments and branches of the government and between the government and other organizations in society constituted coherent sets of policy actors that were instrumental in formulating and developing policy. Similar work in the United States by Heinz, Laumann, Knoke, and others in the area of "policy domains" also endorsed the concept of a broad category of policy-relevant agents that transcended the traditional boundary thought to exist between governments and their publics (Burstein, 1991; Heinz et al., 1990; Knoke, 1987, 1993; Knoke & Pappi, 1996; Laumann & Knoke, 1987).

[10] These larger, knowledge-based sets of actors go by different names in the literature, including "advocacy coalitions" in the work of Sabatier and his colleagues (see Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993.

[11] See also the modifications to this position contained in Sabatier (1993).

[12] For an overview of the literature, see Howlett and Ramesh (1995).

[13] On "idea sets," see Schulman (1988). On the significance of epistemic consensus see Haas (1992), MacRae, Jr. (1993), and Smith (1993).

[14] Peter Hall (1990, p. 59) defines a policy paradigm as establishing "the broad goals behind policy, the related problems or puzzles that policymakers have to solve to get there, and, in large measure, the kind of instruments that can be used to attain these goals." The concept of a paradigm owes its modern origin to Thomas Kuhn's (1962, 1974) work on the nature of scientific learning and the development of scientific theories (see also Masterman, 1970).

[15] This is the usual way that paradigmatic policy change is thought to occur. See Hall (1989, 1992, 1993).

[16] This in itself is not a new insight. The analysis of incremental decisionmaking, for example, attributes a propensity for policy change to occur as a result of analysis of the marginal differences between existing and proposed policy options to the fact that the same sets of policymakers must bargain among themselves to arrive at a decision, and therefore are unlikely to overturn agreements based on past negotiations and compromises (Hayes, 1992).

[17] There are elements of this approach in the existing literature, but the role of material interests remains vague. Thus Peter Hall (1990) explains shifts in policy paradigm with reference to endogenous scientific inquiry and intellectual debate as well as "exogenous shifts in the power of key actors and a broader struggle among competing interests in the community."

[18] One important element of this new agenda reflects a shift in the focus of contemporary subsystem analysis from the static description and classification of networks and communities to a dynamic one focusing attention on how and why they change. While it is premature to attempt to set out a model of subsystem change, several types can be identified. These include those related to internal behavior, such as membership defections, internal member strategies such as mobilization and counter-mobilization or venue alteration, the role of external events, or "shocks," in altering membership patterns, and alterations that occur due to subsystem intersection, merger, or convergence (Baumgartner & Jones, 1994; Coleman, 1994; Grant & MacNamara, 1995; Jenkins-Smith et al., 1991; Richardson et al., 1992).

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