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Instrumentalist Policymaking: Policy Criteria in a Transactional Context

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Instrumentalist Policymaking: Policy Criteria in a Transactional Context

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As an extension of my recent policymaking chapter, *Institutionalist Policymaking* [Hayden 1993, 283-331], this paper deals with policy criteria in an instrumentalist or pragmatist framework. The works of Charles Peirce and Thorstein Veblen emphasized criteria–Peirce with explicit discussion of their character and Veblen with active application in his evaluations of various economies and institutions. Few scholars have continued in their tradition; Seymour Melman [1983], with his excellent Veblenian application of criteria in industrial policy studies, is a notable exception. Interest in the subject of criteria, except by individualist philosophers, has been scarce in the twentieth century until recently. Thirty years ago, it was unique to find a discussion of criteria even briefly presented in books concerned with policymaking, planning, political science, economics, and the like. Today, such discussion has become much more robust. Given the fact that we are the political descendants of the Greeks, one might have expected evaluative criteria to have been a major concern all along.

As the interest in the subject has grown, so has the breadth of its definition. In current literature, the term "criteria" is often used interchangeably with standards, goals, decision rules, particle levels, and so forth. For the purpose here, its original definition as standards for judgment is recaptured–policy judgment in this case. In a policy paradigm, policy criteria are prior to policy evaluation, and policy evaluation is prior

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to and determines the establishment of goals, program standards, decision rules, and so forth. Or stated differently, we need to judge policy before we can know what goals, decision rules, or particle standards are to be implemented. For example, applying the decision rule of producing where marginal costs are equal to marginal benefits is not a policy judgment. The judgments have been made prior to that decision by establishing a system that calls for such a misguided rule.

In general, decision making, and therefore decision sciences, should not be elevated to the level of policy judgments and policymaking. Refined mathematical representations can be developed for the parameters and variables of some decision rules; policy judgments are not so rote or devoid of social process dynamics. Senator John Kerry recently articulated the difference well during a televised hearing when, in response to a statement, he said, "I want to know how you made the judgment, not how you made the decision. What judgment and wisdom guided you?"

Normative Criteria Should Guide Research

We have learned from semiotics that a connection exists between the conditions of signification and the conditions of validity and verification. The interpretation of signs influences what is believed to be valid. In the West, prior to Peirce, the analysis for determining the connection between signification and validity was completed through dichotomous or dualistic analysis. Peirce developed a trichotomy for understanding signs, objects, words, or ideas. For him, such understanding is an action or "cooperation of *three* subjects, a sign, its object and its interpretant" [Peirce 1931, 484]. The interpretant is the social and cultural content that guides interpretation. As Umberto Eco stated, "The content has to be defined as a *cultural unit* (or as a cluster or a system of interconnected cultural units)" [Eco 1979, 62]. One of our basic problems is how to touch such content. The meaning of signs, objects, words, and ideas "is linked to a cultural order, which is the way in which society thinks, speaks and, while speaking, explains the 'purport' of its thought through other thoughts" [Eco 1979, 61]. Knowing the cultural and social world is not possible in the ontological sense. "Every attempt to establish what the referent of a sign is forces us to define the referent in terms of an abstract entity which moreover is only a cultural convention" [Eco 1979, 66]. *The instrumental conception of criteria can be defined as an interpretant of social beliefs. Criteria stand between beliefs and interpretations of policy.* The discoveries and refinements in semiotics since Peirce have given rise to a more comprehensive

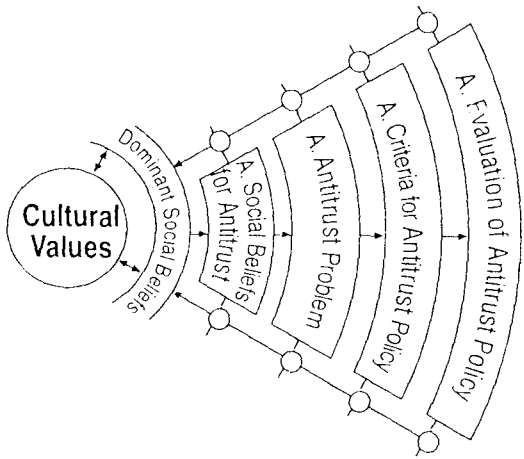
and multidimensional n-chotomy to replace his trichotomy. In a similar manner, we need to take account of the multidimensionality of criteria.

Normalized beliefs and social myths guide the selection of research problems and the articulation of normalized criteria. Normative criteria in turn should guide the research agenda if the research is going to be helpful in making policy for the relevant social context. Thus, we might visualize (knowing the danger of two dimensional metaphors) the process as displayed in Figure 1.

Criteria Are to Be Consistent with Cultural Values and Social Beliefs

As outlined in Figure 1, there is a core of cultural values that are the ultimate criteria for the beliefs and myths of a social system. The anthropological literature, at least since the 1920s, has clarified the distinction between culture and society and therefore between cultural values and social beliefs. The cultural values are the dominant core and seldom change, especially in a policymaking period. Societies, as they change, through policy initiatives or otherwise, continue to be reformulated to make institutions and social beliefs consistent with the cultural values. Being aware of the cultural values and explicitly incorporating them into the design and determination of beliefs and policy criteria will

Figure 1. Social Policy A: Antitrust Area



assist in avoiding unnecessary social tension, alienation, strife, and numerous reformulations. The same is true for dominant core social beliefs if they are not going to be challenged or changed.

The unchanging cultural core is expressed differently as society evolves, even though the cultural values remain stable. Closely associated with the core values are dominant social beliefs with which other social beliefs are to be consistent. In different areas, i.e., antitrust policy or family policy, there are belief clusters that conform to the basic beliefs and values and are enforced in the institutional process for that area, for example, through legal codification, judicial decisions, working rules, and so forth. Figure 1 indicates a social belief cluster for the antitrust area. It is mainly due to infringements on the belief clusters that problems (meaning the failure of institutions, behavior, or attitudes to conform to beliefs) are defined, although beliefs can also be identified as a problem. Of course, there are cases where institutions and beliefs are inconsistent with the more dominant beliefs. Those are more serious problems than when the inconsistency is with less dominant beliefs, many times resulting in violent activity before the problem is solved.

As displayed in Figure 1, the policy criteria for an area are to be relevant to the problem context and consistent with social belief criteria and with the social desires and ends that define the problem. Mark Okrent has explained that, for the pragmatist, the web of beliefs alone is not sufficient for consistency. "Rather, it is a web of beliefs and *desires*, or *ends*. Pragmatists understand mind and language in terms of action. When we think of behavior as action, we think of it as performed for the sake of some end, in light of some beliefs, and the behavior is action only to the extent that the beliefs and desires of the agent together make the action reasonable or rational" [Okrent 1993, 392]. Criteria are drawn in order to guide the action of evaluating to determine whether policy is reasonable. "In actual practice *the problem itself specifies or generates* (as inquiry proceeds) *the criteria of its resolution* . . ." [Schlagel 1986, 236]. In this way, the policy criteria will allow for policy evaluation without encountering continuous circularity or infinite regress of criteria.

Criteria Are Not Bound to a Path of Circular Indeterminacy or Infinite Regress

Some have held that application of criteria is impossible because of the inevitable path of circular indeterminacy, while others have held the same because any attempt to apply criteria is a path of infinite regress. As Robert Lehe clarified the proposition, "It seems that we can not defend

any proposed criterion without already having the knowledge that the criterion was supposed to allow us to identify" [Lehe 1989, 112]. He continues:

> Rational justification consists in appealing to a standard of rationality, so the problem arises how any such standard can itself be rationally justified. If the standard is justified by an appeal to itself, then the proposed justification is viciously circular. To appeal to another standard occasions the question concerning the legitimacy of *that* standard. So *that* standard must be justified by an appeal to itself or by appealing to yet another standard. We seem to be stuck with a choice between an infinite regress and a vicious circle. The problem of the criterion thus constitutes an attack not only on our understanding of the concept of knowledge, but also on the possibility of justifying any conception of rationality [Lehe 1989, 113].

Not Circular Indeterminacy

I do not know the origin of the circular indeterminacy argument regarding criteria, although Montaigne is often quoted. To explain this circularity, a simplified abstraction is often made of the real social world to convert it into a world of only three entities–a fruit, usually an apple (but sometimes a pear), a criterion (but seldom criteria), and an actor (who is usually not mentioned) whose only act is to apply the criterion. The criterion is to be applied to determine acceptable apples. Robert Amico paraphrased the dilemma as follows:

> But how could you ever tell whether your criterion for sorting apples was a good criterion, one that really selected out only the good ones or only the bad ones? It seems that in order to tell whether or not you have a good criterion, you already need to know which apples are good and which are bad; then you could test proposed criteria by their fidelity to this knowledge.
>
> So, if you don't already know which apples are good and which are bad, how can you ever hope to sort them out correctly? And if you already know which are good and which are bad, by what criteria did you learn this? [Amico 1988, 218].

Thus, in Roderick Chisholm's opinion, "The problem of the criterion *has* no solution" [Chisholm 1988, 234].

Walter Neale has warned us to be careful of our metaphors if we are not to be misled by them. The apple-criterion-actor trio metaphor is a case

in point; yet, in spite of its being misleading, it has stimulated the writing of numerous and sundry articles. Although a popular trio in philosophy journals, I have never seen it operating in the halls of Congress or creating indecision at the produce counter of the grocery store. John R. Commons cautioned us against the illusion of certainty of such simple models because they give "rise to metaphysical 'entities' and 'substances' conceived as existing apart from and independent of the behavior of officials and citizens" [Commons 1969, 124-125].

In Chisholm's work, the word "policy" is substituted for the word "apples" without concern for the drastic contextual, substantive, and symbolic differences between the two, and thus he concludes that the application of policy criteria is not possible. However, if we look at a real-world context of apple policy, we find a different situation.

The policy criteria are not designed by looking at apples, nor are they designed by an actor. First, the criteria for a good apple in the United States are the consequence of many different overlapping institutions, knowledge bases, and competing interests that include government agencies, research universities, regulatory agencies, consumer protection groups, health advocates, technological systems, labor unions, nutrition researchers, growers' cooperatives and their attorneys, environmental protection agencies and their attorneys, foreign trade inspectors, advertising agencies, fertilizer and pesticide production corporations, and so forth. And there are lobbyists, scientists, government and university analysts, and billions of dollars associated with all of those institutional processes. They are all involved in designing, refining, testing, creating, and applying the criteria for judging apples. Second, the apple design criteria that are conveyed to scientists in universities, such as shelf life, color, shine, bruisability, nutrition, size conformity, herbicide and pesticide tolerance, and health risk, do not come from the apple. We do not observe apples to find the criteria. The criteria are determined through socioeconomic processes. We did not need to find an apple to know a good apple; the kind of apple wanted did not exist. It was to be created by policy-driven science.

Advanced technology, of course, plays a major role in our beliefs about the kind of tree that ought to exist. When it became clear that a machine could grasp a tree by the trunk and shake the fruit from it, the question became, can a tree be designed to withstand the shaking and its fruit to resist the bruising? The answer in some cases was yes. Of course, the kind of criteria Seymour Melman emphasized in his "Technological Bill of Rights" were not applied [Melman 1983, 143].

Which criteria should dominate? That is the real question–not the circularity one. Or to state in terms of semioticians who deal in real-world

signs and meaning, we know a sign by the interpretant of the referent (object). We do not know the sign of X by the sign of X. We do not know good apples by looking at apples. Amico paraphrased Chisolm's view on circularity as follows: "It seems that in order to tell whether or not you have a good criterion you already need to know which apples are good and which are bad . . ." [Amico 1988, 208]. Chisolm's mistake was in defining criteria by *which* rather than by *characteristics* and *qualities*. The mere coincidence of a property with a given class, such as apples or policy, "is generally insufficient to warrant calling that characteristic a criterion of quality. Logically there must be some epistemological connection between the property and the valuation as well" [Sadler 1985, 292]. Selected apples will reflect the criteria. We know the sign of X (X's signification) by the interpretant of X.

Consistency between criteria and policy evaluation also should not be labeled as circular. It is not circular to say that a tractor and a plow must be technologically consistent to function together. A call for consistent linkage does not mean that a tractor and plow are the same. Likewise, it is not circular to say that we can judge policy as acceptable when it is consistent with criteria. The criteria stand between the social system and the policy evaluation. "Instead of there being anything strange or paradoxical in the existence of situations in which means are constituents of the very end-objects they have helped to bring into existence, such situations occur whenever behavior succeeds in intelligent projection of ends-in-view that direct activity to resolution of the antecedent" [Dewey 1939, 49].

Not Infinite Regress

Upon contemplating criteria, it appears to some, as mentioned above, that there is an infinite regress of criteria because behind every criteria it is necessary to have criteria to judge the criteria, and behind that criteria it would be necessary to have another set of criteria, and so on to the world of infinity. Thus, the task is an endless regress and therefore impossible.

Peirce contributed to this with his fascination with infinite regress. He wrote: "The meaning of a representation can be nothing but a representation. In fact it is nothing but the representation itself conceived as stripped of irrelevant clothing. But this clothing never can be completely stripped off; it is only changed for something more diaphanous. So there is an infinite regress here. Finally, the interpretant is nothing but another representation to which the torch of truth is handed along; and as representation, it has its interpretant again. Lo, another infinite series" [Peirce

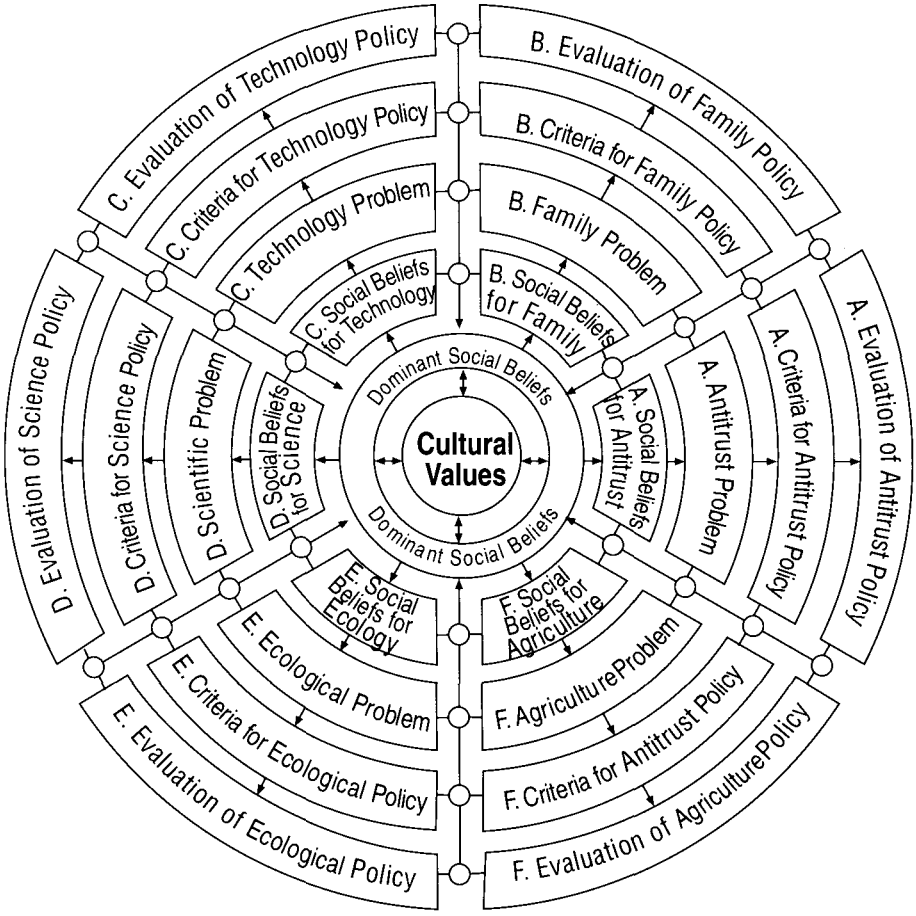
1931, 492]. That does not follow except by the application of classical logic, which does not have much to do with the real world. Cultures and social systems are not structured by some logic or objective rule. The social world has not been kept in such a quandary. We are saved from series to infinity by the way the world works.

First, if we return to Figure 1, we see criterial regress is stopped in one direction by social beliefs and values. Social beliefs are given by society and serve as the criteria for policy criteria.

If we look at Figure 2 (of which Figure 1 is a part), we see that infinite regress is stopped in another direction by the other societal policy areas that surround the antitrust interest of Social Policy A. The policy criteria for evaluating policy for antitrust is to be consistent with the beliefs, policy criteria, and evaluation in all the other societal areas in Figure 2. For example, antitrust policies are not separate from family policies (Social Policy B). Antitrust policies could allow prices to reach such a level that most families could not maintain a real income sufficient to support family needs. An example is the failure of the Reagan and Bush administrations to enforce antitrust regulations of prescription drugs, thus allowing prices in the United States to rise to a level from six to ten times greater than those in England and Germany, respectively, for the same drugs. Or, on the other hand, policies enforcing fierce competition may push prices so low that corporations must destroy the ecological system (Social Policy E) in order to lower costs to meet the low prices.

A third aspect with which criteria are to be consistent is different social arrangements and different social beliefs of different groups that share the same cultural values. The multidirectional concerns in establishing criteria are not limited to cases where there are common beliefs. This could be demonstrated by the overlap of more than one Figure 2, each with the same culture but different societal beliefs. This pluralistic concern has often been incorrectly referred to as multiculturalism; it is more correctly termed multisocietalism. The concern for pluralism "entails the use of multiple sets of evaluative criteria . . ." [Pankrantz 1993, 22] for resolving policy questions. Within a nation, with a common culture, different beliefs and institutions exist among different groups if freedom of varying associations is allowed. Belgium is a good example, with distinct religious groups that have the same culture. Institutions and laws can vary from nation to nation with the same culture, or from state to state, region to region, or religion to religion with the same culture. In the United States, agricultural policy that fits the Amish of Pennsylvania may not fit the wheat farmers of Montana or Cargill's corporate hog factories of the high plains. If free association and differences in the struc-

Figure 2. Six Integrated Social Policy Areas



ture of association is a Western belief, then policies should reflect those differences, and the formation of policy criteria for evaluating them should be guided by the differences. As the technological society advances, we can expect even greater variation in the kinds of association and beliefs among groups.

Finally, formation of policy criteria is constrained in some areas by the overlap of policies with other cultures, either within a nation or transnationally. This multicultural concern could be demonstrated with the overlap of more than one Figure 2, each with different cultures and usually with different societal beliefs. Within the United States, the Amish farmer in Pennsylvania and Cargill's corporate hog executives are of the same Western culture. Yet, within the United States, cultures different from the mainstream culture with different cultural values are a reality; for example, the nations-within-the-nation of the Native Americans. Likewise, cultural differences are to be found between nations, as in the case of India and the United States. (A modeling of the latter kind of cultural differences and overlap was explained in a paper delivered at the 1994 AFEE meeting by Richard Adkisson and Dilmus James [1994].)

In summary, infinite regress is not the problem in criteria design. Cultures, societies, and the institutional overlap of the same do not provide for such mental meandering. The arduous task is to define, design, and apply criteria consistent with all the overlapping policy concerns for a social group and across various groups and cultures. The issue is one of constraint, and whether a set of criteria is adequate depends on what surrounds the policy area. Constraint is the overwhelming issue–not the freedom of regress. If the real institutional constraints are not recognized and heeded, then some groups will be severely harmed as policy criteria are narrowly focused on misguided beliefs. No better example of narrowly focused criteria can be found than in the well-known Lawrence Summers memo in which he selected money making as the dominant policy criterion and therefore judged that it was efficient to create health hazards for low-income black people in Africa and ecological damage for their habitat [Summers 1993, 66]. These kinds of conclusions are not new in neoclassical economics. The same policy criterion of money making was utilized by Burton Weisbrod, a few decades prior to Summers, to demonstrate that the value of keeping young white males in school was four times that for young black females. Thus, he concluded that no special effort should be made to educate the latter [Weisbrod 1965, 125-143]. The lack of concern at the policy level for multisocietalism and multiculturalism results from a lack of emphasis on multidimensional criteria in policy evaluation.

The influence of semiotics literature is partially responsible for concepts such as infinite regress and continuous circularity gaining credence in the understanding and application of criteria. The literature of semiotics is full of warnings against using misleading simplistic or logical metaphors for the interpretation and meaning of ideas and ideals. Yet that same literature does not always practice what it signs. Eco can be used as an example. He states that a cultural and social system "continuously, translates signs into other signs, and definitions into other definitions, words into icons, icons into ostensive signs, ostensive signs into new definitions, new definitions into propositional functions, propositional functions into exemplifying sentences and so on" [Eco 1979, 71]. He adds that the social system proposes in this way to its members an uninterrupted chain of social units that translates and explains each other [1976]. Thus, Eco has proposed a metaphor consistent with Figures 1 and 2–concepts linked together explaining, defining, and constraining each other like an uninterrupted chain. Note that he did not say words into icons and icons into words. Yet, elsewhere Eco has utilized the rhetoric and metaphor of continuous circularity. In this case, Eco's metaphor is incorrect. It implies a continuous indeterminacy because of circularity, just as Peirce's infinite series metaphor implies that we can never make criteria operational because their verification can never be finalized.

One of the reasons that abstract metaphors, such as infinite regress, have developed that are so misleading for policymaking is because the authors have divorced themselves from the institutional reality of policymaking. The more we are in the real world bumping shoulders with labor leaders, being handled by lobbyists, haranguing assistants to find a data base, meeting with religious leaders, calling think tanks and university professors for relevant theory, arguing with farmers in hog show arenas, being heckled in steel mills, being challenged at legislative hearings, being visited by advocacy group attorneys with threats of lawsuits, and facing opposing scientists on television–the more there is of real-world involvement–the less there is an opportunity for refined and simplified metaphors such as circularity and regress to take over.

The more abstract the metaphors, the less reliable; they often do not even give the correct direction. Abstraction means "removing the clutter." That clutter, however, is the social life process, and no idea has legitimacy except as it is embedded in a life process. Power bumps, mental jostling, and legal body checks on our body of theory all help to dissolve simple abstract metaphors and replace them with the complex ones corresponding to the real world. If policy criteria are to be based on social ideas, then

social experience is necessary for designing and naming criteria. As Peirce stated: "The procedures leading from a bunch of experiences to a name is the same as that which leads from the experience of things to that *sign* of things, the idea. *Ideas are already a semiotic product*" [Peirce in Eco 1979, 166]. For policy criteria, ideas need to be the semiotic product of a heavy dose of real-world policy experience.

Criteria and Contextual Shift

Being able to set aside circularity and infinite regress still leaves us with the intimidating task of designing criteria consistent with the *new* beliefs and institutions that will be necessary to solve a problem. Making *new* beliefs the locus of concern, I refer to as the contextual-shift aspect of policy criteria. Earlier it was explained that criteria are to be consistent with belief clusters in the relevant context, yet problem solving usually requires changes in institutions, beliefs, and technology–that is, it requires changes in the context. There is no contextual shift if the problem can be solved by selecting policies that will align and strengthen the bonds of current institutions and beliefs. If, however, the socioeconomic problem is more pronounced, a common situation is for the policy criteria to be consistent with current beliefs, thereby selecting policy arrangements that perpetuate the problem or make it worse. Institutions usually need to be changed to solve problems. This means a major task of any policy analysis is to design a set of criteria that will be consistent with the new set of beliefs and institutions necessary for solving the problem. As the contextual shift is taking place, new technology, or other disruptions, can change the context markedly. This is why technology assessment, prior to innovation, is crucial. The faster disruptions happen, the less opportunity for the instrumental research process to gain an understanding of the most reasonable policy and the less opportunity for the policy to be successful.

This contextual-shift approach to policy analysis calls for an extensive and expensive investment in policy research. Although expensive, the alternative of committing billions of dollars on resources for misaligned policies that fail is even more expensive, very frustrating, and harmful to citizens as well. The research is necessary for designing and refining the criteria so that policy will lead to a new context consistent with the needs of the whole social matrix. The research modeling must be iterative because it will need to be constantly revised as new knowledge and information are found. Irrespective of the extent of research, an overarching pragmatic criterion is that "it is not until after one has acted on certain

hypotheses that the situation will eventuate which will either confirm or disconfirm the proposed solution" [Schlagel 1986, 232; original in italics].

One of the basic assumptions of democracy is that we will make policy mistakes. That is one of the reasons the quick reaction expressed in a democracy is necessary. Given the task at hand, we can be assured that mistakes will be made because the policy criteria were designed for a world that does not yet exist. When we begin to implement that world, there are sure to be mistakes in both the criteria that were selected and the institutional arrangements. To fulfil the iterative process, procedures for constant monitoring of policy consequences and subsequent reformulation of policies and programs are necessary. "One cannot know *prior* to taking actions whether they will eventuate in the desired consequences because the confirming state of affairs not only does not exist when the question of the truth of a particular solution is raised, but *its very existence* is contingent upon many interrelated factors, one of which is the particular procedure or procedures one takes . . . in dealing with the problem" [Schlagel 1986, 232]. The function of democracy cannot be fulfilled in a vacuum. Policies must be implemented to test them and to improve the social modeling. If the social modeling is not ongoing, guidance will not be available for the democratic policymakers. This means a major part of policy analysis will be to study the community structural changes that take place as a result of the application of a set of criteria, and their resulting policies, and to change the criteria if they lead to undesirable consequences.

This criteria development process is consistent with what Paul Dale Bush has explained in more general terms as the evolution from ceremonial to instrumentally warranted patterns of behavior [Bush 1983, 34-39]. In the policy research process, this means the initial criteria selected will be more ceremonial than the final set of criteria. As Bush states, instrumental standards of judgment "are validated in the continuity of the problem-solving process" [Bush 1987, 1080].

Criteria as Process

No attempt is being made here to contend, as some who were trying to save the foundationalist view have stated, that criteria can be interpreted and applied objectively. First, objectivity is not wanted; the purpose is for normative criteria to be applied. (In addition, no super race with the powers of objective interpretation and application is being assumed. Persons with the kind of personality or ideology that leads them to want to pursue objective truth should probably be considered dangerous because

too often they find it.) Consistency with social criteria is the goal of policy judgments. The refinement of the interpretation and application of criteria is achieved through discretionary processes made up of legislative bodies, judicial proceedings, research inquiries, advocacy efforts, and so forth. The validity of the interpretation and application of criteria depends on the extent of social processing, or social interference if you will. Marc Tool explained that what is required is a criterion of judgment that draws on and is reflective of experience and a continuously refined product of reasoned reflection [Tool 1979, 289]. The reflection of experience and the resulting challenge to criteria and their interpretation come swiftly in a democracy, as do the counter challenges. The challenges are swift because consequences are real and not necessarily pleasant for all parties involved. The process, called democracy, is what I have heard some institutionalists refer to as being too "messy" to allow for a policy science. Quite the opposite is the case. The democratic process refines criteria so that more refined analysis and evaluation is possible. In the policy world, refinement and order are the consequences of conflict within discretionary processes.

The One Best Way Is Not Viable

Conflicting strands have been interwoven through the fabric of the social sciences that revolve around whether there is "one best way." One strand has emphasized that new technology requires a new social structure and process that is consistent with the new technology. This implies that there is one best way for society to be structured. Coexisting with this is the view that instrumentalism requires democracy, which allows for alternative kinds of associations. In a democracy, different groups structure their associations and behavior quite differently. The Fordism studies and the Tavistock sociotechnical studies in Europe found that automobile plants with similar technology in different countries have very different social structures and social relationships in the plants. In addition, from observation we recognize that modern technology encourages even greater diversity among the social structures of different groups. Much of the frustration of Western global policy analysts, after the dissolution of the Soviet-United States dominance system, is because so many countries and social groups have structured themselves according to models that do not coincide with the one best way envisioned by Western analysts. The general problem with much analysis is the "search for criteria that are appropriate to all cases in the genre" [Sadler 1985, 282]. As Sadler explains, it is a mistake to assume that "commonality" is the

principle that is taken to validate a set of criteria [1985, 292]. This is not possible unless the cases are the same. "But as the variety of cases expands, the probability that a common set of criteria will be uniformly applicable decreases, simply because the number of potential criteria which could be drawn upon is large" [1985, 292].

I would speculate that the idea for the "one best way," or "the optimum" as the neoclassical economist would say, comes to us not from observation, but rather from the same tradition that gave us "objective truth." Beginning with Plato, the Greeks fashioned their gods according to mathematical form, and the Romans and Christians continued the tradition. This was carried into science and analysis in the Western world because early science was an extension of religion, and like religion, science was searching for the truth–the one truth–the one objective truth according to mathematical form [Olson 1995, chap. 1]. The mistaken idea that there is one acceptable set of beliefs and criteria has had a long history in philosophy. As Chisholm stated the proposition: "If we find a pair of beliefs that *contradict* each other, we will reject at least one of them" [Chisholm 1988, 233].

If we believe in (or have) discretionary democracy and free association, and if new technology allows for more diversity, then numerous different social structures are viable. Thus, the job of designing policy criteria also becomes much more difficult. A single set of criteria for health care policy, for example, is not possible. A different set of criteria is needed for each context, and a still different set where the contexts overlap. What we will attempt to accomplish with policies in the United States will differ depending on whether it is for the Amish, the Mormons, recent Somalian immigrants, the Winnebagos, or Orthodox Jews. It may be satisfying to read neat little formulae, as often presented in the literature of our profession, for policymaking. However, it accomplishes little more than to please psychological predilections. Reality is much more complex. An economist stated at one of our meetings that the Social Fabric Matrix just brings too much detail into the analysis. That detail is what planners and civil servants work with every day in the bureaucracies of our city, county, state, and national governments where they are constantly monitored and challenged on a daily basis by the citizenry and the citizenry's covey of lawyers. An old cliche is that the devil is in the details; so is good policy. A reality of policy criteria is the detail of numerous different kinds of group contexts. The only alternative that I can conceive of for avoiding this kind of messiness (as it is often called) is the one-best-way solution, as has been attempted during some of the darker and more brutal eras of human history.

For too long, the general idea that compromise and common ground is the solution has frustrated good policymaking. While compromise and common ground are essential for a democracy to function, that does not mean that one policy or a unified common ground should be sought to be enforced throughout the social setting. As I heard former President Jimmy Carter say recently, when interviewed for a televised news report, "Diversity need not be a handicap." Then he added, "We can find a common ground." No! The two statements are in conflict. That they are in conflict logically is not the concern. The important concern is that the statements are in conflict with designing relevant criteria. This kind of "common ground" thinking leads either to abstract, mushy criteria that will not fit any context well, and thus accomplishes very little, or to a firm set of criteria that ignore the beliefs and unique associations of certain groups. When such groups are silenced institutionally by being ignored, criteria cannot be properly drawn. Such marginalization, in addition, leads to anger and civil unrest, a situation that has become more common recently. The ripping and tearing of our social fabric because of cavalier criteria contributes to the social disruption and violence that is engulfing local streets and communities as well as global relationships.

Mandates

One issue that has encouraged my interest in criteria at this time is the battle with regard to mandates. Some of the difficulty has occurred because the mandates from the central government have often been stated in terms of rules, flow levels, and requirements to take a particular action or to establish a particular technical procedure: for example, if the central government requires a waste treatment plant for every city of a certain size or vaccination of every person. Such mandates ignore contextual variety. Treatment plants may not be necessary if the city does not generate a high level of waste or if the natural environment is robust enough to cleanse the water without treatment. Everyone may not need to be vaccinated if some are from affluent families and have already received their vaccinations.

The more instrumentally correct approach would be for the central government to define and establish criteria for the local governments, corporations, and families to use in making judgments and decisions; for example, criteria about being free from a particular disease or maintaining clean water. In this way, these institutions can be more creative in designing alternative ways to meet the criteria. More importantly, they can respond to the criteria consistent with the relevant context.

In contrast to the centralized mandate approach, some champions of local government have overlooked the necessity for the central government and constitutional bodies to mandate criteria at all. An example is Eleanor Ostrom who, in her book *Crafting Institutions* [1992], a book that I generally recommend, explains that in crafting institutions for irrigation systems, all the multiple layers of government should be making rules for the success of such irrigation systems. She outlines three levels of rules: (1) operational rules, which directly affect the day-to-day decisions of water users and suppliers at the local level; (2) collective-choice rules, which indirectly affect operational rules through policymaking, management, and policy adjudication rules; and (3) constitutional-choice rules, which determine who is eligible to participate in the system and what specific rules will be used to craft the set of collective-choice rules, which in turn affect the set of operational rules [Ostrom 1992, 45].

Ostrom's paradigm depends exclusively on rule making, an excessive dependence for two reasons. First, constitutional action is finalized mainly through judicial judgments, and the latter are mainly finalized by the provision of criteria for other bodies to use in making decisions. Thus, the idea of constitutional rules being the dominant mode is inconsistent with the experience mode of judicial bodies. Second, Ostrom has indicated that most rules must be made at the local level in order to allow for the diverse kinds of decisions that must accompany the diverse contexts at the local level. As she correctly states, rules codified by external administrative agencies, national legislation, and the judicial arena rarely reflect the particular circumstance of a particular system [Ostrom 1992, 47]. If most rules must be made at the operational level, and if mandates from the collective legislative and judicial bodies are needed, then how can the desired effect be achieved when bodies have only been provided with rule-making functions? It cannot. Thus, the collective policymaking and judicial bodies need to depend more on criteria. Criteria can be established without establishing special rules; thus, creativity can be used to define rules, technology, and institutions for the local situations.

One of the problems of the *new institutional economics* is the way its authors envision structuring local and central governance functions. They hope that governance can emerge from the nodes in the social network to the center, usually through tactical decisions rather than through policy criteria. *Institutionalists*, however, understand that constitutional and collective governance must be from the center out. The center should emphasize policy criteria rather than particular rules and design them, as stated above, for a pluralistic world.

Social Setting and Instrumental Competency

The reality of pluralistic multisocietalism and multiculturalism makes the recommendation for ethnocentricity impossible. Recently a few institutionalists have insisted that instrumentalists should not be involved in instrumental policy analysis except in their own native setting. For them, an instrumentalist must not conduct policy analysis outside his or her own societal and cultural milieu. This view is termed "ethnocentrism" in philosophy literature, or to use the language of Eco, the interpretant of foreign instrumental scholars is negative. "Foreign" in this case is defined as anyone from a different society or culture, irrespective of their national status. The ethnocentric view has been proclaimed without explanation about why foreigners are unable to conduct policy analysis in, for example, the United States, and without consulting epistemological or policymaking literature.

The first way in which this view fails is that it does not address scientific criteria to inform us what criteria were utilized to arrive at its conclusions. For example, many instrumentalists do not accept the possibility of the scientific criteria of coherence and correspondence [see Bush 1993; Schlagel 1986]. Does the ethnocentric view? What about other criteria such as falsifiability, consistency, charity, extensibility, external validity, and so forth? The criteria have not been defined, explained, or justified by the ethnocentrists.

The second failure is that the characteristics of foreigners that make them unable to apply instrumentalism at the U.S. General Accounting Office or the Congressional Research Office are never explained. Women and men come from India, Japan, Africa, and China, for example, and excel in areas such as plastic surgery, shopping center construction, corporate finance, cattle ranch management, and so forth. Yet, it is claimed that there is some, as yet undefined, aspect that makes it impossible for foreign persons to excel as instrumental policy scientists.

Third, the empirical evidence indicates that the ethnocentristic view fails when tested in real-world agencies. Women and men from around the world, who have gained expertise as instrumental institutionalists, are functioning very well as policy analysts and policymakers in federal, state, and local government agencies in the United States. What documentation exists that these persons, some of whom are members of our Association, are failures? None that I have been able to discover.

Finally, with regard to our main concern, the ethnocentric view is inconsistent with the reality of the policymaking world. As Nancy Levit has explained, the criteria of inquiry leads to a more communalist, rather than atomistic, resolution of problems because they favor more complex

and contextual explanations rather than anachronistic self-contained solutions [1989, 273]. In addition, as explained above, seldom can we find a problem in the modern world that is not cross-societal or cross-cultural. Criteria should be drawn on a cross-societal and cross-cultural basis because problems are cross-societal and cross-cultural. Thus, all analysts should deal with the beliefs and values of others in a real-world policy context and design criteria with the guidance of foreign beliefs and values. Dealing with others' beliefs and social structures cannot be avoided by instrumental policy analysts. As policy analysts, we are all foreigners.

Because of the focus on validation in pragmatism and because of the communal nature of policy analysis, there are numerous safeguards within the process itself against individual subjectivity gaining the upper hand. As Schlagel has stated with regard to the applied pragmatic criterion, because problems are intersubjectively identified, and "the criteria of their solution . . . subject to *intractable external constraints* with *publically accessible* evidence . . ., the application of this criterion is no more susceptible to subjective abuse–and is no less rigorous–than any other criterion" [Schlagel 1986, 236].

To deal with someone else's societal interests does not mean that the analyst must agree with their societal structure. Let us assume that some Winnebagos become instrumentalists and go to work for the federal government to do policy analysis on the problems identified by the current mainstream population in the United States. To make judgments about the mainstream's rationality, the Winnebagos need not insist that the mainstream natives' system of thought parallel their own in content [see Katz 1989, 269]. "What is required, and what makes the native's set of beliefs, actions and utterances count as rational, is not their content but their *systematic* nature" [Katz 1989, 269]. Instrumental policy analysts can develop consistent systematic models (as explained with Figures 1 and 2 above) for describing and evaluating policies without agreeing with the beliefs of all agents involved. Indeed they must, if the policy domain is committed to democratic pluralism, because there are numerous different societal and cultural components that are overlapped in a problem context.

Science Is a Policy Area

The last section will comment on science as policy. Science is an area of policymaking, and scientists aspire to be accurate policymakers with explicit criteria. A spectrum of writing, ranging from that of Gjessling Gustrom [1968] to that of Stephen Gould [1991], emphasizes that science

is influenced by the conceptual system of the culture and society. Science, like other policymaking areas, is directed, constrained, and controlled by normative social criteria. It is conducted by a community of inquirers with similar policies, strategies, and tactics for scientific activities [Hayden 1993, 294-301]. "The belief in an independent, self-subsistent universe, knowable at least in principle, provided the ontological setting for most scientific inquiry and philosophic speculation in the West, until recently, as Dewey persuasively argues in the *Quest for Certainty*" [Schlagel 1986, 203]. A few decades ago, young economics recruits were drilled in the beliefs of the objective logical positivists with their catechism of belief criteria about coherence, correspondence, external verification, logic, and so forth. As Ernan McMullin said of logical positivism: "It was, perhaps, the most ambitious foundationalism in the entire history of philosophy, outdoing even that of Aristotle. And as we know, it collapsed" [1974, 658]. Science today is organized around an array of various sets of normative propositions that, in turn, are organized around an array directed by different integrated sets of beliefs and is practiced through an array of contextual criteria. "There are many other criteria involved in science besides those of valid argument" [McMullin 1974, 669]. Institutionalist science, as a world theory, is holistic, instrumentalist or pragmatic, integrative, and evolutionary. "Insofar as a world theory stakes out intellectual claims, either explicitly or implicitly, it purports to be knowledge, and as such it is subject to the criteria for meaning and knowledge whatever those criteria may be" [Lee 1983, 151]. Scientific criteria are policy standards for scientific rationality and interpretation. "The mistake of the logical positivists was to reduce rationality to logicality in the hope of making verification a simple and noncontroversial affair, thus making possible a conveniently sharp line of demarcation between science and the fuzzier sorts of human activity. But even at the very level of observation, there is the matter of *choosing* the concepts in terms of which the observation will be expressed . . ." [McMullin 1974, 671].

Because of the relationship between science and the contextual framework, "science cannot, in consequence, be constructed in logicalist or foundationalist terms" [McMullin 1974, 675]. This means we should no longer talk in terms of truth or not truth but rather in terms of being valid or not valid, or making warranted or nonwarranted assertions. Are the findings valid in terms of the normative criteria and context selected? Foundationalists, like their fundamentalist counterparts in the religious world, claim there are basic foundations or fundamental truths that are given. When we observe more closely, however, what is assumed to be

truth apart from societal beliefs is usually consistent with mainstream societal beliefs and cultural values.

As with other policymaking areas, human institutions provide the criteria and context of science. Scientific criteria and context are policy decisions made by the bureaucracies of research universities, corporate financing sources, and other institutions. Today, the normative criteria of science are dispensed more and more, along with the massive sum of money for doing the research, from government bureaucracies that have the legal and ethical responsibility to direct scientific research. In addition, scientific journals endorse policy criteria directives through the articles accepted and through the evaluation process. When I receive a submitted paper to evaluate for a journal, I receive a list of policy criteria that are to be applied in making the evaluation. Science does not take place in a vacuum. The actors called scientists are cultural and social actors. Science is organized in social institutions; sciencing is a social policy process. Thus, the fierce battles about scientific policy criteria are important.

The basic social beliefs and normative policy criteria of science are extremely important today because scientific findings are very influential in general, and because different scientific criteria give us different socio-ecological results. If we return to Figure 2, we are reminded that scientific policy criteria inconsistent with other areas will damage the other areas. For example, the United States could not have survived as a democracy had the tests and experiments the scientists conducted around 1900 based on I.Q. test results, which found Jews and Italians inferior, been allowed to stand. Likewise, our system will not be allowed to prosper if the neoclassical standard of the market is to be the scientific criterion for making judgments about ecological systems policy, or educational policy, or international trade agreement policy, or whatever. Kathryn George emphasizes that what is defined to be sustainable agriculture depends on which members of the community select the criteria to guide the scientific work for determining sustainable practices [George 1992, 48-57]. The same is true of other areas. Scientific knowledge is not discovered; it is created through the application of beliefs and scientific policy criteria. The models that are identified as the context corresponding to the relevant problem are created and selected by the scientists. This means science, and therefore scientific knowledge, is not a consequence of idle curiosity. "Science advances by adopting the instruments and doings of directed practice, and the knowledge thus gained becomes a means of the development of arts which bring nature still further into actual and potential ser-

vice of human purposes and valuations" [Dewey 1929, 85]. Thus, to use Dewey's term, science is a "directed activity."[1]

Conclusion

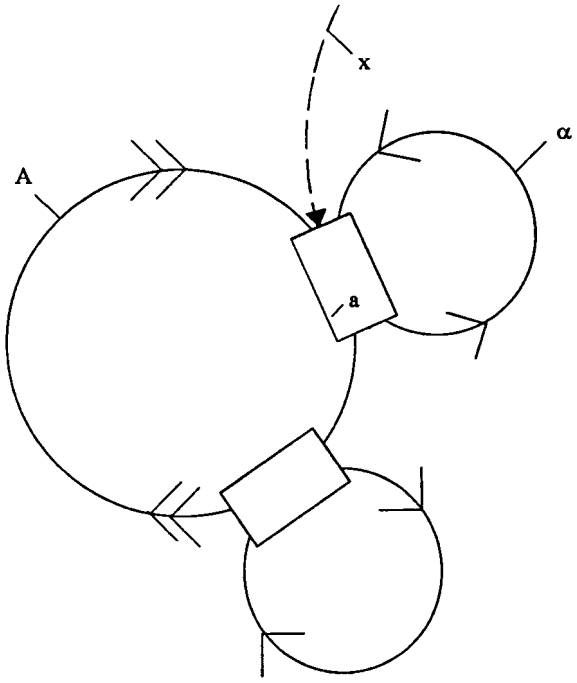
For the directed activity of policymaking to be successful, criteria are needed for judging the various alternatives available for achieving a solution to the problem at hand in a manner that is consistent with the communities' standards of morality and justice. As stated above, for policy criteria to fulfill this role, they need to be embedded in the context of pluralistic social beliefs and overlapping institutions.

The approach explained here is inconsistent with the narrow ideological approach so prevalent in neoclassical economics in recent decades. Neoclassicalists have endorsed a narrow set of policy criteria to confine and overpower the rich criterial texture found in our pluralistic world. Karl Polanyi, in his *Great Transformation*, one of the most important books written in the twentieth century, explained the dangers of allowing the narrow criteria of a market system to overpower other social criteria. To avoid the repression and subjugation of the community requires that the multitude of social beliefs be given standing in policy judgments. This is an arduous policy task, but the alternative is the destructive approach of adopting criteria external to contextual reality. Formulating criteria for our instrumentalist policy framework is a huge research undertaking; however, it is exceeded by the larger adverse policy consequences that follow without it.

Notes

1. The scientific approach presented here appears to be consistent with the problem-oriented approach of instrumentalism explained by Kurt Dofer. He explains how scientific paradigms deal with new problems and questions in order to adjust, or fail to adjust, their paradigms when presented with evidence that conflicts with an accepted scientific ideology [Dofer 1991, 541-544]. The combination of x and a in his Figure 2 [p. 543], reproduced as Figure 3 below, appears to perform the same function as the Problem level in Figures 1 and 2 above.

Figure 3. Ideology: External Challenges and Self-Referential Closure Judgment



A - Global Closure Structure
a - Local Issue Point
α - Closure Judgment, "Single Exit" Response Function
x - Inquiry, Challenge from External World

Source: Dofer [1991, 540].

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