



The Role of Values in Policy Process Theories

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examines the role of values in policy process theories, addressing the central question of whether policy propositions are solely based on objective facts or whether values play an active role in policymaking. **Design/Methodology/Approach:** Using a systematic review of two authoritative volumes of Theories of the Policy Process (edited by Weible and Sabatier), the research analyzes eight theoretical frameworks and identifies 28 distinct influences of values in different stages of policymaking.

Findings: The findings reveal that values are not merely background factors but active and decisive elements shaping all stages of the policy process, including agenda-setting, formulation, adoption, implementation, and evaluation. Even in seemingly objective frameworks such as the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) and policy diffusion, professional, ideological, and cultural values shape the selection and acceptance of solutions. The study also demonstrates that value conflicts among actors (e.g., policy entrepreneurs, bureaucrats, political elites, and target communities) significantly affect coalitions, decisions, and policy outcomes.

Practical Implications: The study suggests three implications for policymakers: (1) designing sustainable and effective policies requires integrating the value systems of society and stakeholders into all stages of policymaking; (2) policymakers must recognize, manage, and reconcile conflicts between competing values, such as individual vs. collective or professional vs. ideological values; and (3) understanding values can enhance civic engagement and align policies with religious and cultural foundations.

Originality/Value: By highlighting 28 distinct ways in which values influence the policy process, this research challenges the positivist claim of value-free policy science and provides a post-positivist perspective that emphasizes the value-ladenness of policy theories. It contributes to both policy studies and axiology by offering a framework for understanding policymaking as a dynamic arena of value interaction, conflict, and redefinition.

Keywords

Policy Process Theories Values in Policy-Making Positivism and Social Sciences Public Value Knowledge Production.

Introduction

The prevailing perception of science is that it is a body of proven knowledge. In this view, scientific theories are meticulously derived from empirical findings obtained through observation and experimentation. Science is built upon what can be seen, heard, touched, and the like. This perspective gained prominence during the scientific revolution, primarily in the 17th century, through the work of pioneering scientists such as Galileo and Newton. Influenced by the achievements of great "experimentalists" like Galileo, some argued that experience should increasingly be regarded as the source of knowledge. Subsequently, this view was continually reinforced by the remarkable achievements of empirical science (Chalmers, 2023: 13). In the 19th century, nearly all those who discussed the nature of science agreed that science must be "free from value judgments." Above all, positivists and their followers emphasized that science deals with facts. Facts are objective matters, and knowledge seeks to uncover them. In contrast, values are subjective and based on human interests, cannot be derived from truths, and truths should not be influenced by values (McMullin, 2007). Indeed, positivism is an ideology of the 19th century, referred to as the "post-Enlightenment era" (Delanty, 2005: 41). The roots of positivist thought can be traced to Saint-Simon, who argued: "The greatest and best means of advancing science is to place the world within the framework of experience. Of course, we do not mean the vast world, but rather this small world, namely humanity, which we can subject to experience" (Mohammad Amzian, 2001: 38). Positivism is fundamentally based on opposing any thought that transcends the realm of the senses, whether religious, metaphysical, or rational (Mohammad Amzian, 2001: 40). Comte states: "As long as we think positivistically about astronomy or physics, we should not think differently about politics or religion. Thus, the positivist method that triumphed in the natural sciences must extend to all dimensions of thought" (Mohammad Amzian, 2001: 40). Durkheim considered social phenomena as objects and believed they should be studied as such. He argued that there is no need to philosophically examine the nature of these phenomena to ascertain their validity (Mohammad Amzian, 2001: 43-44). In short, in positivism, there is no distinction between natural and social sciences. In this view, the meaning of knowledge is defined solely by naturalistic science. The foundation of science is observation, meaning that scientists rely solely on experience to discover general laws. Science does not judge its subject and is a neutral endeavor free from social and ethical values. Positivism has often been criticized for being a conservative doctrine—one that supports the supremacy of science over other forms of knowledge and is driven by a

strong instrumental rationality that seeks intellectual dominance over nature and society (Delanty, 2005: 38-40).

It is worth noting that under the umbrella of naturalism, there are numerous epistemological stances, including empiricism (emphasizing the foundational role of experience as the basis of all knowledge) (Hume); verificationism (asserting that knowledge claims require empirical or observational evidence to be deemed valid) (Hempel); logical positivism (claiming that deductive logic and inductive inference form the basis of knowledge) (Schlick); and falsificationism (asserting that knowledge claims involve systematic attempts to refute or falsify them using empirical or observational evidence) (Popper) (Dixon & Dogan, 2004). In all these cases, the emphasis is on the experience of facts, their observation, and the testing of theories, with the assumption that science production is a neutral and value-free process.

Although this study focuses on policy-making as a subset of social sciences, it should be noted that such an explanation of knowledge production faces serious criticism even within the natural sciences. First, science does not begin with observation; observation itself is influenced by theories (Chalmers, 2023: 34). Second, observational statements are theory-laden and thus fallible, creating disruptions in evaluation (Chalmers, 2023: 50). Third, the process of knowledge production cannot solely rely on facts. Given the two previous points, every theory requires prior theories for validation, and this chain does not end unless, as Popper suggests, there are foundational propositions. He states regarding these propositions: "These propositions are accepted as a result of a decision or agreement and are thus conventional" (Chalmers, 2023: 79). Reflecting on Popper's notion of decision and agreement, it becomes clear that the domain of science cannot be confined to objective facts and devoid of value-based or metaphysical elements. The critical question is: On what basis is that decision made? This is where concepts such as values enter the process of knowledge production.

Beyond the critiques of this perspective in the philosophy of natural sciences—which, by extension, face even more serious critiques in the social sciences—this study aims to examine the propositions generated in policy studies. It seeks to answer whether the thinkers in this field have relied solely on facts in their theories and propositions about the policy process, or whether values and metaphysical elements also play a role in their theorizing. If such concepts are present in these theories, what is their position, and what role do they play? In other words, what influence do values have in the policy process?

To highlight the practical importance of addressing these questions, several points can be noted. From the perspective of Western theories, one of the key themes in public administration is the concept of public value failure. In this approach, the government is not merely on the sidelines of the market; beyond addressing market failures, even in cases where the market operates efficiently, the fundamental question for policymakers remains: Is there an issue in providing and delivering public values? (Danaifard, 2016: 39-40). Understanding the role of the "value" component in policy process theories can significantly aid governments in succeeding in this mission.

1. Literature Review

Numerous studies have addressed the role of values in science broadly, in social sciences, in policy analysis, or the impact of metaphysical concepts such as ethics in public policy or values in specific policy domains. Some of these studies are referenced below.

	Title	Author(s) and Year of Publication	Description
1	Values in Science	McMullin (2007)	This article broadly addresses the role of values in science.
2	Understanding the Role of Individual and Social Values of Managers in Implementing Approved Policies in Iranian Government Organizations	Samadi, Faghihi & Daneshfard (2018)	The aim of this research is to understand the social and individual values of government managers that influence the implementation of policies approved by policymakers.
3	The role of values and facts in policy development for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families	Gallagher (1992)	This article examines the relative role of facts and values in policymaking for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. A decision-making model is presented, demonstrating how values influence policy choices. The value assumptions underlying Public Law 99-457 (Part H) are discussed. Finally, suggestions are offered on how values influence professional decision-making.
4	Geriatric health care	Clark (1991)	This analysis focuses on three

	policy in the United States and Canada: A comparison of facts and values in defining the problems		elements of the elderly healthcare dilemma (the factual basis of predictions, the role of important social values, and the relationship between ethics and healthcare policy) to compare elderly healthcare policies in Canada and the U.S. Examining these factors reveals significant differences between the two countries in how healthcare—particularly elderly care—is viewed as an individual right versus a social responsibility.
5	Economic Analysis, Moral Philosophy, and Public Policy	Hausman, McPherson, & Satz (2017)	Through extensive reasoning and examples, this book demonstrates how understanding moral philosophy can improve economic analysis, how moral philosophy can benefit from economists' analytical tools, and how economic analysis and moral philosophy together can inform public policy.

What distinguishes the present study from previous research is its specific aim to systematically examine scholarly literature on the policy process, with particular attention to the role and conceptual position of values within major theoretical frameworks. This study provides a comprehensive overview of key policy process theories, focusing on how values are mentioned, interpreted, and positioned within each framework.

It is worth noting that these theories have been developed based on extensive analyses of numerous policy cases across different sectors. By identifying common features and conceptual patterns in these cases, theorists have constructed structured frameworks to explain how policymaking processes function.

Therefore, studying these theoretical models offers an indirect yet broad view of policy processes themselves. This approach is in some respects comparable to methods used in the philosophy of natural sciences, where theories are often formed through the examination of historical patterns in the development and organization of scientific knowledge.

2. Theoretical Foundations

2-1. Values

The term "value" originally referred to the economic assessment of something, particularly in the context of economic exchange, as seen in the works of Adam Smith, the 18th-century political economist. The concept of value expanded significantly into broader philosophical domains during the 19th century under the influence of various thinkers and schools: neo-Kantians Rudolf Hermann Lotze and Albrecht Ritschl; Friedrich Nietzsche, who proposed the theory of transvaluation of all values; Alexius Meinong and Christian von Ehrenfels; and Eduard von Hartmann, the philosopher of the unconscious, whose "outline of axiology" was the first to use the term in its title. Hugo Münsterberg, often regarded as the founder of applied psychology, and Ralph Barton Perry's book *General Theory of Value* (1926) are considered masterpieces of this new approach. Perry theorized that a value is "any object of interest." He later explored eight domains of "value": ethics, religion, art, science, economics, politics, law, and custom. A common distinction is made between instrumental and intrinsic values—that is, between what is good as a means and what is good as an end. John Dewey, in *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922) and *Theory of Valuation* (1939), offered a pragmatic interpretation, attempting to break down the distinction between means and ends, though his effort emphasized that many practical matters in human life—such as health, knowledge, and virtue—are good in both senses. Other philosophers, such as C.I. Lewis, Georg Henrik von Wright, and W.K. Frankena, expanded these distinctions—for example, between instrumental value (good for a specific purpose) and technical value (good at performing a task) or between contributory value (good as part of a whole) and final value (good as a whole) (Britannica, 2015, June 10).

2-2. Policy Process Theories

Policy process research examines the complex interactions among actors, institutions, events, and contexts that shape public policies over time. As Weible (2023, pp. 1-4) explains, this field recognizes the inherently political and multifaceted nature of policy-making, where no single theoretical perspective can fully capture the dynamics involved. Various theories - each offering distinct conceptual lenses - have emerged to analyze different aspects of the policy process, from agenda-setting and formulation to implementation and evaluation. These theoretical approaches share common foundations in examining how bounded-rational actors operate within specific contexts, respond to events, and produce policy outcomes, while

differing in their focal points and levels of analysis. The plurality of theories reflects both the complexity of policy processes and the field's ongoing development, with each framework contributing partial but complementary insights into how policies emerge, evolve, and affect societies.

2-3. Multiple Streams Framework (MSF)

The Multiple Streams Framework serves as a critical tool for analyzing the policy process under conditions of ambiguity and global complexity. It has been applied in various domains, such as global warming, nuclear energy, migration, and multilateral trade agreements. Complex and contested issues, coupled with ambiguity in political life, have increased the relevance of this framework (Herweg, Zahariadis & Zohlnhöfer, 2023).

2-4. Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET)

Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET) seeks to explain the phenomenon that, while political processes are generally characterized by stability and incrementalism, they occasionally produce significant and widespread changes compared to the past (Baumgartner, Jones, & Mortensen, 2023). In policy studies, punctuated equilibrium refers to a specific state where political conflict extends beyond the constraints of policy subsystems dominated by experts, spreading to other policy-making arenas. This concept relies on the mechanism of policy image—how a policy is described or understood—and a system of partially independent institutional arenas where policy-making can occur. The general hypothesis of punctuated equilibrium extends this framework to situations where information flows into a policy-making system, and the system, responding to these environmental cues, pays attention to the issue and takes action to address it if necessary. Policy images play a critical role in expanding issues beyond the control of experts and specific interests, which are referred to as "policy monopolies" (True, Jones, & Baumgartner, 2007).

2-5. Social Construction and Policy Design

The idea of social construction has its roots in the sociology of knowledge. This perspective posits that humans create their environment based on their analyses. Members of a society construct patterns of meaning through interpretation and then assume these patterns exist. Social constructivists believe that the linguistic categories used to understand concepts are products of a society's beliefs rather than objective, real, or natural meanings (Danaifard, 2016: 106).

2-6. Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF)

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) is a theoretical framework designed to describe and explain how individuals collaborate to make collective decisions in public policy. Positioned between macro and micro theories of the policy process, it acknowledges that the broader environment (institutions, geography, culture, etc.) influences individual and collective actors, particularly their beliefs and behaviors. In turn, the environment is also shaped by the actors' behaviors and the policies they pursue. ACF focuses on aspects of policy-making beyond elections and social movements, where individual and group efforts are often overlooked by news media, social media, and the general public. However, the dynamics highlighted by ACF fundamentally influence policy processes and collective decisions at all levels of governance (Nohrstedt et al., 2023).

2-7. Policy Feedback Theory

Policy Feedback Theory focuses on the question of how policies influence and shape political interactions. Although research on policy feedback effects has recently been added to the political science literature, the idea that public policies can shape the political behavior of a range of actors has a long history in this discipline (Mettler & SoRelle, 2023).

2-8. Narrative Policy Framework (NPF)

The Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) is an approach to studying the policy process that addresses the central question of whether policy narratives play a significant role in the policy process. The growing scientific hypothesis in this perspective is that policy narratives do have such a role. Reasons for studying narratives include the fact that policy debates are often conducted through competing narratives, occurring in both formal institutional settings (e.g., congressional debates) and informal settings (e.g., interest group websites, Twitter, YouTube). Additionally, narratives influence various stages of the policy process, such as problem definition, legislation, bureaucratic rules, media communications, policy evaluations, expert testimonies, public opinions, and more. Thus, NPF posits that understanding the role of narratives is critical to comprehending the policy process in various settings and at multiple points within this process (Jones et al., 2023).

3. Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) Framework

The Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) Framework provides concepts, variables, a meta-theoretical language, and diagnostic and

empirical tools for policy analysts to examine various institutional arrangements. Institutional arrangements are defined as "persistent patterns of human actions in situations structured by rules, norms, shared strategies, and the physical world." In the context of public policy, regulatory frameworks, subsidy programs, or participatory processes can be understood as institutional arrangements (Schlager & Villamayor-Tomas, 2023).

The goal of the IAD Framework is to enable researchers to examine and develop explanations showing how people use institutional arrangements to solve collective problems and understand the logic of institutional designs. In other words, the IAD Framework has a problem-solving orientation. This orientation distinguishes it from other major policy process frameworks and theories. While the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) focuses on coalitions and coalition activities, and Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET) explains patterns of activity and policy outcomes, IAD focuses on diagnostic and prescriptive research. The starting point for applying the IAD Framework is typically a public problem, often framed as a collective action problem or social dilemma in its common applications. Many public problems (such as public service congestion, environmental degradation, and financial crises) arise as a result of uncoordinated decisions by governments, companies, and/or civic organizations. The outcome for an actor depends not only on their own choices and actions but also on the choices and actions of other actors in the situation. This interdependence, both in actions and outcomes, means that to solve problems and achieve desired outcomes, actors must consider each other and coordinate their actions and choices. However, cooperation and coordination cannot be taken for granted. Indeed, individual and collective interests often diverge, creating social dilemmas. These dilemmas are the essence of collective action problems, and institutional arrangements serve as a means to align them (Schlager & Villamayor-Tomas, 2023).

3-1. Policy Diffusion and Innovation

Other frameworks referenced in this study, despite offering diverse and valuable theories on how to view the public policy process, share a common tendency. Specifically, they focus on policy-making in a single locality, state, or country. However, policies spread—or diffuse—across governments. Understanding the nature of diffusion processes helps students and researchers see where policy ideas originate and why policymakers adopt them. Policy diffusion occurs when a government's decision to adopt a policy innovation is influenced by the choices of other governments (de Oliveira et al., 2023).

3-2. Ecology of Games Framework

Structurally, each ecology of games consists of a set of policy actors, issues, and forums related to a specific policy domain within a predefined geographical space, along with emerging games. While all systems are composed of similar separate components, the number and types of actors, issues, forums, and games vary significantly across different systems (Lubell, Mewhirter & Robbins, 2023).

3-3. Methodology

Given the study's objective of examining the role of the concept of values in policy process theories as real and accepted instances of theorizing in the academic community of policy studies, a systematic review of these theories appears to be the appropriate method to achieve this goal. To ensure the validity and comprehensiveness of the scientific sources under review, theories selected were those articulated by the prominent scholar in this field, Christopher M. Weible, in the book *Theories of the Policy Process*. The fifth edition of this book, published in 2023, has received 792 citations on Google Scholar to date, while the previous edition, the fourth, published in 2014, has garnered 5,540 citations. According to Google Scholar, the total citations to Weible's works amount to 27,283. Alongside Weible's *Theories of the Policy Process*, another book with the same title, edited by another prominent researcher in this field, Paul A. Sabatier, was also used as a basis for the review.

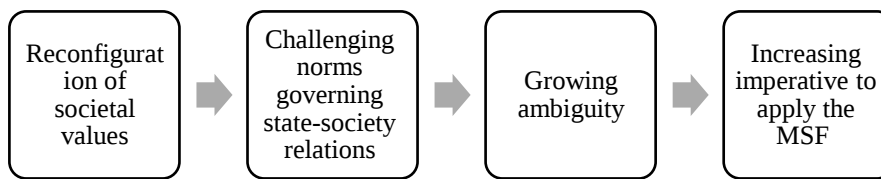
4. Findings

4-1. Role of Values in the Policy Process from the Perspective of the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF)

- Reconfiguration of Societal Values and the Increased Need for MSF

The Multiple Streams Framework is based on the garbage can model of organizational choice. On the other hand, the primary candidates for the garbage cans are issues involving changes in normative structures—priorities of fundamental values in a political system—and issues where no active participant dominates the policy process. When a society is in the process of reconfiguring its values, the established norms that form the basis of government-society relations are challenged. As a result, conventional wisdom is questioned, bringing opposing groups to the forefront of change. The activation of new groups and widespread disagreement over the relevant values that should guide political decision-making, in turn, increase ambiguity and enable the emergence of new issues and solutions. Such decoupling from previously established connections between windows,

issues, and policies complicates the process, as new and possibly unrelated elements are thrown into the can. From this perspective, issues like privatization or governmental reforms are good examples for applying the MSF model (Zahariadis, 2007).



4-2. Values and Problem Definition

The problem stream includes various conditions that policymakers and citizens wish to address. Problems have a "perceptual and interpretive element." Some conditions are defined as problems and thus receive more attention than others. How is this done? Typically, a set of values is associated with a specific issue. Changes in specific conditions may harm those values, thereby triggering interest and attention. People define conditions as problems by allowing their values and beliefs to guide their decisions, categorizing issues into one group rather than another, comparing current performance with past performance, and comparing conditions across different countries.

4-3. Policy Entrepreneurs' Values and Linking Problems to Solutions

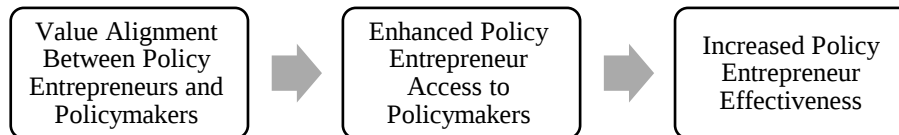
From the perspective of the Multiple Streams Framework, for an issue to gain prominence on the agenda and ultimately be decided upon, the independent streams (problem, political, and policy) must converge at some point. The opportunity to combine these streams arises when a "policy window" (sometimes called a "window of opportunity") opens. Moreover, due to the lack of a natural or inevitable connection between a problem and a solution, the MSF suggests that these two are typically linked by a policy entrepreneur and presented to policymakers receptive to the ideas (Herweg, Zahariadis, & Zohlnhöfer, 2023).



4-4. Shared Values Between Policy Entrepreneurs and Policymakers and Increased Success

Not all entrepreneurs succeed at all times. More successful entrepreneurs are those with greater access to policymakers. For example, the Adam Smith

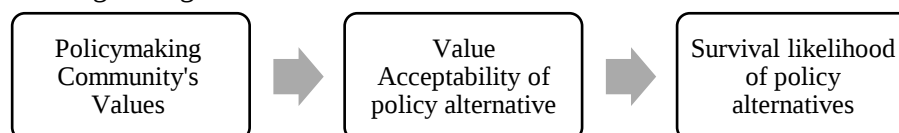
Institute had greater access to the government during Margaret Thatcher's premiership in the UK because its ideology was closer to hers than to other groups. Thus, options proposed by individuals associated with the institute were more readily accepted by policymakers (Zahariadis, 2007).



4-5. Societal Values and the Survival of Proposals

The survival and selection of policy proposals within the policy primeval soup are not random occurrences but rather follow predictable patterns shaped by rigorous selection mechanisms. For a proposal to emerge as a viable policy alternative, it must satisfy four fundamental survival criteria: (1) technical feasibility, (2) value acceptability, (3) public acquiescence, and (4) financial viability. When proposals fail to meet these threshold conditions - whether due to implementation challenges, value conflicts, lack of political support, or excessive costs - they are effectively eliminated from serious policy consideration during the pre-decisional phase of policy development (Herweg, Zahariadis, & Zohlhöfer, 2023).

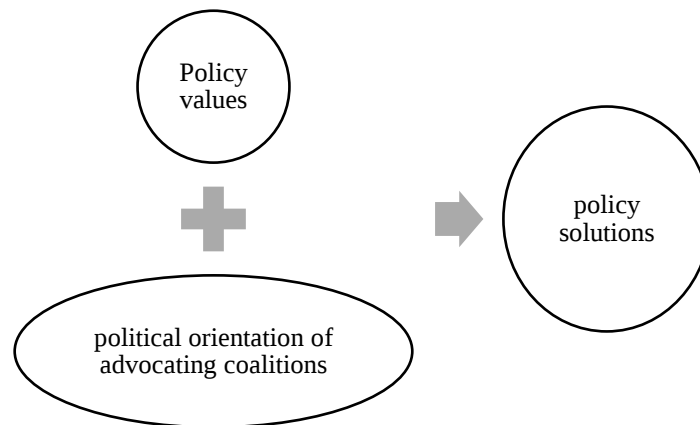
Thus, the acceptability of a proposal's embedded values within the policy community's value system proves particularly decisive, as value congruence significantly enhances a proposal's survival prospects and substantially increases its likelihood of ultimate adoption. This value alignment serves as both a necessary condition for policy viability and a catalyst for coalition-building among stakeholders.



4-6. Policymakers' Values and Solution Selection

Policy values represent fundamental attributes embedded within policy solutions, though their specific manifestations evolve according to the political orientation of advocating coalitions. Rather than being inherently fixed to solutions, these values are dynamically constructed and politically ascribed by competing coalitions. As normative principles intrinsically valued in policymaking, they constitute political constructs rather than objective facts. Consider the contrast between defined-benefit pension systems (e.g., U.S. Social Security) and individual retirement accounts (e.g.,

401(k) plans): Factual components remain comparable (contribution rates, distribution formulas); Value propositions differ fundamentally (collective welfare vs. individual responsibility). This value differentiation drives policy preferences beyond mere technical or financial considerations. Policy solutions typically embody multiple coexisting values that resonate differentially with potential coalition members. Actors within the policy process selectively emphasize, interpret, and mobilize around these values based on perceived congruence with their own normative frameworks (Zahariadis, 2021).

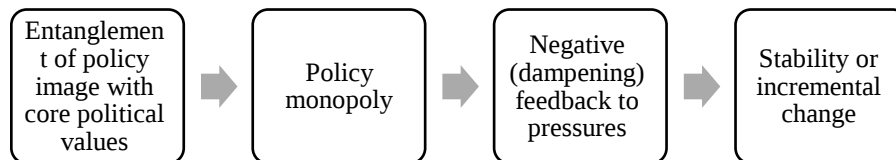


4-7. Role of Values in the Policy Process from the Perspective of Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET)

Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET) seeks to explain the phenomenon that, while political processes are generally characterized by stability and incrementalism, they occasionally produce significant and widespread changes compared to the past (Baumgartner, Jones, & Mortensen, 2023). In policy studies, punctuated equilibrium refers to a specific state where political conflict extends beyond the constraints of policy subsystems dominated by experts, spreading to other policy-making arenas. This concept relies on the mechanism of policy image—how a policy is described or understood—and a system of partially independent institutional arenas where policy-making can occur. The general hypothesis of punctuated equilibrium extends this framework to situations where information flows into a policy-making system, and the system, responding to these environmental cues, pays attention to the issue and takes action to address it if necessary. Policy images play a critical role in expanding issues beyond the control of experts and specific interests, which are referred to as "policy monopolies" (True, Jones, & Baumgartner, 2007).

4-8. Policy Image Connection to Fundamental Political Values and Sustained Stability

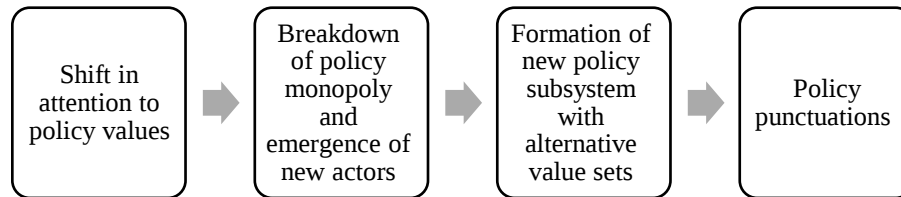
When a subsystem is dominated by a specific interest, it is best described as a policy monopoly. A policy monopoly has a definable institutional structure responsible for policy-making in a specific issue area, supported by a powerful idea or image. This image is typically linked to fundamental political values and can be communicated simply and directly to the public. Since a successful policy monopoly systematically reduces pressures for change, it is said to involve a negative feedback process. However, policy monopolies are not permanently invulnerable (Baumgartner, Jones, & Mortensen, 2023).



4-9. Shift in Attention from One Value to Another and Creating Disruption

Policy-making decisions are of the bounded rationality type. Choice situations are multifaceted, yet decision-makers tend to perceive choices based on a limited set of attributes and often face difficulties in trading off among these attributes. If a particular policy promotes economic growth but simultaneously has negative implications for human rights, one of these conflicting values may take center stage in decision-makers' attention. If attention shifts between these two dimensions—for example, due to a scandal or a change in the composition of the decision-making group, which sometimes occurs—the chosen policy may also change dramatically. With increasing pressure for change, resistance may succeed for a time, but if the pressures are sufficient, it may lead to widespread intervention by political actors and governmental institutions previously uninvolved. Generally, this requires a significant shift in the supporting policy image. When an issue is redefined or previously dormant dimensions of the debate are highlighted, new actors who were previously sidelined feel empowered to assert their authority. These new actors may insist on rewriting rules and shifting the balance of power, which is reinforced by new institutional structures as previously dominant agencies and institutions are forced to share power with groups or agencies that have gained new legitimacy. Thus, changes resulting from the breakdown of a policy monopoly may become locked in as institutional reforms in the future. These new institutions persist after public

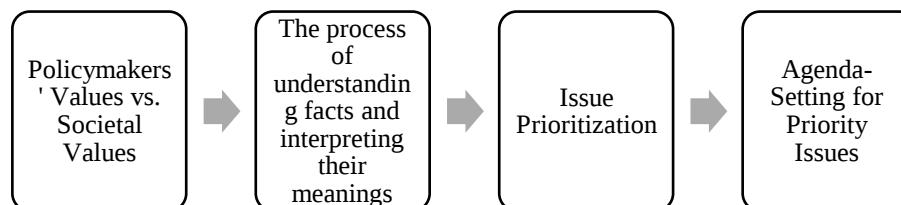
and political conflicts subside, often establishing a new equilibrium in the policy domain that continues even after the issue exits the agenda and enters parallel processing in a newly transformed policy community (True, Jones, & Baumgartner, 2007).



5. Role of Values in the Policy Process from the Perspective of Social Construction and Policy Design

5-1. Values and Agenda-Setting

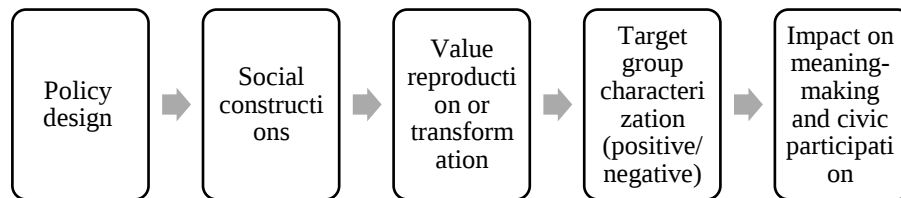
While empirical positivist analyses strive to provide causal descriptions and predict behaviors, social perception seeks to describe the root causes associated with behaviors by relying on the process of *Verstehen* (interpretive understanding). *Verstehen* refers to the process of interpreting and understanding facts and their meanings using associated social values and goals (Danaifard, 2007: 92). Public issues refer to matters that affect the general public. Many issues exist that society wishes to address, but only those deemed sufficiently important and serious by policymakers are placed on the public policy agenda. Defining an issue is a political matter and is largely based on values (Danaifard, 2016: 110).



5-2. Policy Design, Value Reproduction, and Impact on Meaning and Civic Participation

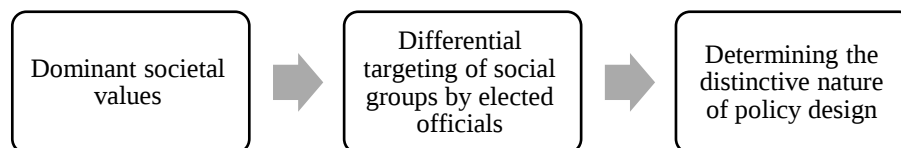
Policy design, alongside the benefits or costs it brings to target groups, also pursues specific goals. "Target groups" or "policy audiences" refer to individuals affected by a particular policy, which may involve gaining benefits or bearing costs. The realities concerning the characteristics of the group may be factual, but the value elements that make them positive or negative are products of social and political processes. Policy design also

includes solutions, tools, a logic for legitimacy, and a structure for implementation. Collectively, the institutional culture of society, power dynamics, and social constructs are products of policy design. In this context, social construction helps define conditions that lead to the reproduction or transformation of values (Danaifard, 2016: 112-113). The goal of the social construction framework is to explain how and why specific types of policies are produced in particular contexts and how these policies shape subsequent participation patterns, political orientations, meanings of citizenship, and the form of dominant democracy. Social constructs are "created," "used," and "manipulated" in the production of policy and the meaning of citizenship (Ingram, Schneider, & DeLeon, 2007).



5-3. Dominant Social Values and Policy Design

According to this perspective, policymakers, particularly elected politicians, face different challenges in policy design concerning target groups (Danaifard, 2016: 120). Political scientists and public choice scholars agree that elected politicians seek re-election, and concerns about re-election influence their decisions in supporting and proposing legislation. Elected leaders respond to pressures from organized interests but also anticipate the electoral consequences of adopting value positions that do not align with dominant values (Ingram, Schneider, & DeLeon, 2007).

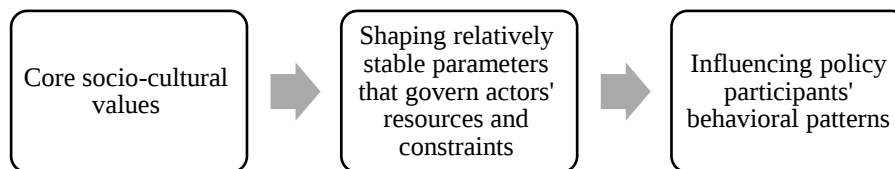


6. Role of Values in the Policy Process from the Perspective of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF)

6-1. Socio-Cultural Values and Their Impact on Participant Behavior

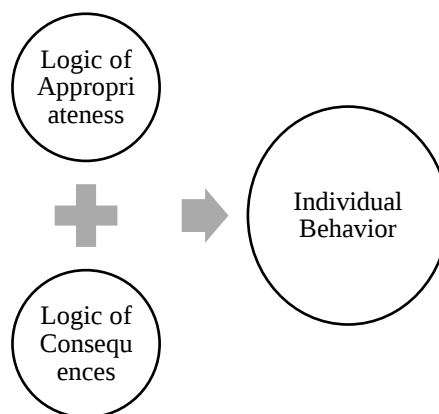
The Advocacy Coalition Framework operates on assumptions at three levels: macro, meso, and micro. At the macro level, the framework posits that much of the policy process occurs within policy subsystems, involving negotiations among specialists. However, participant behavior within these

subsystems is influenced by two sets of external factors—one relatively stable and the other highly dynamic. Relatively stable parameters include fundamental issue characteristics (e.g., differences between groundwater and surface water), the basic distribution of natural resources, fundamental socio-cultural values, and the basic constitutional structure. These stable external factors rarely change over periods of about a decade and thus seldom provide a catalyst for behavioral or policy change within a policy subsystem. However, they are critical in determining the resources and constraints within which subsystem actors must operate (Sabatier & Weible, 2007).



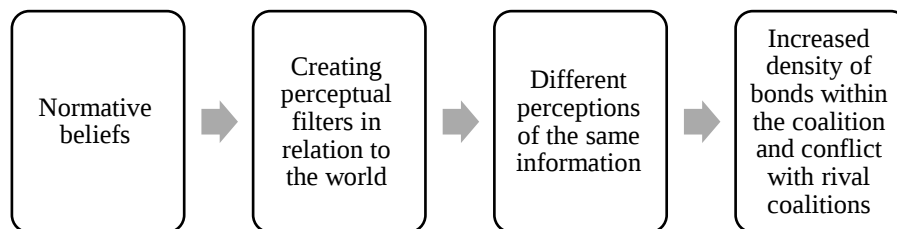
6-2. Altruistic Values and Individual Behavior

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) fundamentally differs from rational choice frameworks. While rational choice frameworks assume actors are self-interested and rationally pursue relatively simple material interests, ACF assumes that normative beliefs must be empirically tested and does not preclude the possibility of altruistic behavior. In fact, ACF recognizes two normative reasoning systems: a "logic of appropriateness," where correct behavior means adhering to rules, and a "logic of consequences," where correct behavior involves maximizing positive outcomes. This is a classic contrast between sociologists and economists, as each logic starts from fundamentally different principles (Sabatier & Weible, 2007).



6-3. Normative Beliefs, Actor Orientations, and Political Conflicts

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) emphasizes the difficulty of changing normative beliefs and actors' tendency to engage with the world through a set of perceptual filters formed by prior beliefs, which are challenging to alter. Consequently, actors from different coalitions likely perceive the same information in vastly different ways, leading to distrust. This, in turn, strengthens ties within the same coalitions and exacerbates conflict between rival coalitions. The ACF's individual model is particularly well-suited to explaining the escalation and persistence of political conflicts (Sabatier & Weible, 2007).

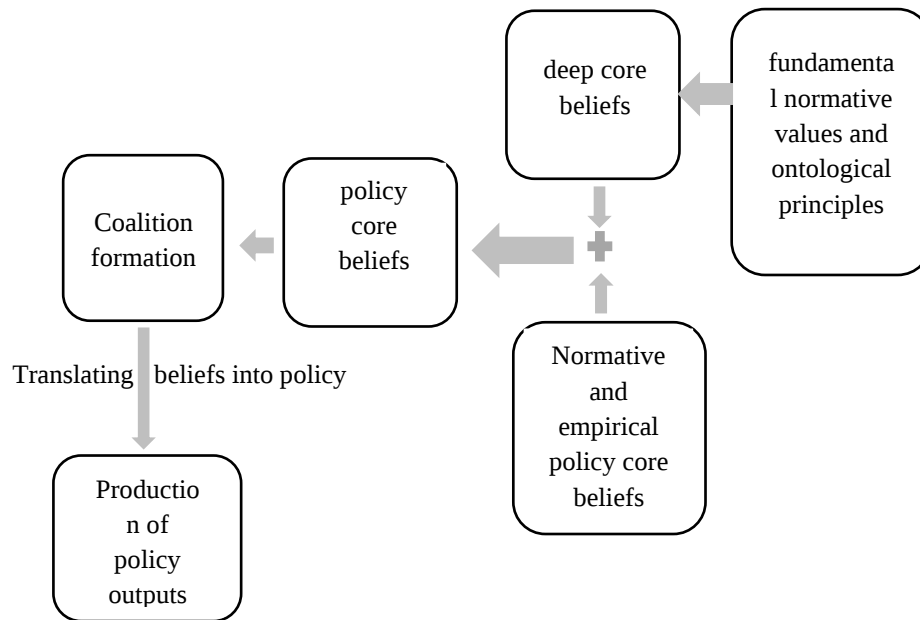


6-4. Fundamental Impact of Normative Core Beliefs, Ontological Principles, and Policy Values on Policy Formulation

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) views policy actors as individuals with bounded rationality, meaning they are motivated by instrumental goals but are often unclear about how to achieve them and have limited cognitive capacities to process stimuli such as information and experience. Given these limitations, actors within subsystems simplify the world through their "belief system," which encompasses their perceived core values and policy-related beliefs. The ACF proposes a three-tiered belief system model, ranging from general to specific. "Deep core beliefs" include fundamental normative values and ontological principles, such as the nature of humans, norms regarding social justice, and the prioritization of primary values (e.g., individual liberty vs. social equality) (Nohrstedt et al., 2023). To elaborate, at the broadest level, deep core beliefs encompass most policy subsystems. These include general normative assumptions about human nature, the relative priority of core values such as liberty and equality, the relative priority of the welfare of different groups, the appropriate role of government versus markets, and who should participate in governmental decision-making. Traditional left/right scales operate at the level of deep core beliefs. Deep core beliefs are primarily products of childhood socialization and are thus very difficult to change (Sabatier & Weible, 2007).

Deep core beliefs are not specific to a policy subsystem and can apply across multiple subsystems. They shape and constrain policy core beliefs, which lie in the middle of the belief system and refer to general normative and empirical beliefs related to policy within a subsystem. Normative policy core beliefs reflect an individual's basic orientation and value priorities for a policy subsystem and may specify whose welfare is of particular concern. Empirical policy core beliefs include general assessments of a problem's severity, its primary causes, and the perceived impacts of policies. Finally, "secondary beliefs" more narrowly address elements such as appropriate tools for coalition coordination or specific "policy tools" suitable for achieving outcomes identified in an individual's policy core beliefs. Belief systems provide the raw materials through which policy actors engage in reasoning, persuasion, storytelling, and framing through analytical debates. Here, belief systems—particularly perceptions of problem causes and severity or the estimated impacts of policy solutions—intertwine with scientific and technical information, which peaks in legitimizing and supporting one perspective while discrediting others. For example, policy actors may bolster their arguments about a problem's severity by referencing science to support their claims. While the framework of belief change does not ignore the importance of other information sources, it highlights scientific and technical information as powerful political fuel in public discourse. The ACF assumes that policy actors within a subsystem can form one or more advocacy coalitions based on shared policy core beliefs. Members of a coalition coordinate their policy activities to translate their beliefs into public policies while blocking rivals' efforts to do the same. From this perspective, public policies represent political maneuvers and negotiations among coalitions and efforts to translate rival coalitions' belief systems into policy (Nohrstedt et al., 2023).

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) assumes that policy participants strive to translate elements of their belief systems into actual policies before their opponents can do the same. To have any prospect of success, they must seek allies, share resources, and develop complementary strategies (Sabatier & Weible, 2007).



7. Role of Values in the Policy Process from the Perspective of Policy Feedback Theory

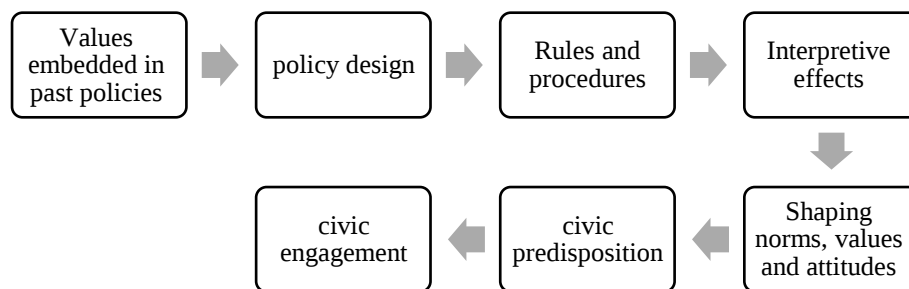
7-1. Policy Feedback Framework as a Tool for Evaluating Governance Performance Against Desired Values

Studying the policy process not only engages researchers in a new form of policy analysis overlooked by dominant approaches but also provides a foundation for it. The field of policy analysis, which aims to predict the most valuable approaches to solving social problems or evaluate the ability of existing policies to do so, typically focuses exclusively on issues of economic efficiency or social welfare. Analysts evaluate policy options based on the cost savings they promote and the social benefits they generate, such as higher university graduation rates or reduced incarceration rates. Meanwhile, policy process researchers have helped clarify these issues, including whether adopting such options is politically feasible and, if not, under what conditions it could be. Policy Feedback Theory lies at the intersection of these two approaches: it incorporates political considerations into policy analysis and evaluates how policies affect critical aspects of governance, such as promoting or hindering civic participation, advancing or obstructing the development of influential groups, and how they impact institutional governance capacity. Such analysis can shed light on policies' impact on democracy. It can also enrich policy process studies by highlighting how prior policies influence the

likelihood and shape of future policies. Given that democratic forms of governance are under increasing threat, the value of an approach to policy analysis that seriously examines the democratic capacity of government programs has perhaps never been higher for researchers, policymakers, and the general public (Mettler & SoRelle, 2023).

7-2. Core Values of Previous Policies and Their Impact on New Values

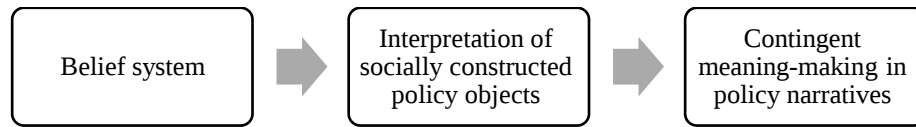
Public policies also impose rules and procedures on citizens that stem from policy design and implementation and may be a source of interpretive effects, which can also be called "cognitive effects" or "learning effects." Interpretive effects refer to the ability of public policies to shape norms, values, and attitudes. This dimension of the Policy Feedback model is partly based on Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram's (1993) social construction and policy design theory, which elaborates how citizens' subjective experiences of citizenship's meaning are shaped by policies and how this affects their status, identity, and role in the political community (Mettler & SoRelle, 2023).



8. Role of Values in the Policy Process from the Perspective of the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF)

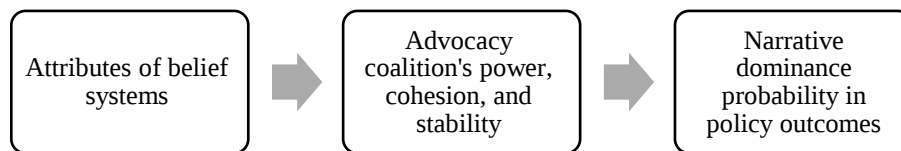
8-1. Belief Systems and Their Role in Narrative Content

If existing belief systems that help associated groups of people understand a political issue are grasped, they provide a significant ability to determine the structure of the semantic variables of policy narratives related to that issue. For example, ideologies or cultures that individuals in groups use to help understand the world around them are belief systems. These belief systems provide systematic ways to understand what socially constructed objects are likely to mean for specific categories of people (Jones et al., 2023). It is evident that belief systems are themselves influenced by a set of values that are important to these individuals.



8-2. Belief Systems, Power, and Coalition Cohesion

Advocacy coalitions whose policy narratives include higher levels of coalition glue (coalition stability, strength, and intra-coalition solidarity) are more likely to influence policy outcomes. NPF research has consistently found statistically significant differences between opposing stakeholder groups and the coalitional use of policy beliefs. These same criteria (i.e., coalition stability, strength, and solidarity over time) can also be used to assess behavior and dynamics within and between coalitions (Jones et al., 2023).



8-3. Potential for Normative and Value-Oriented Future Studies

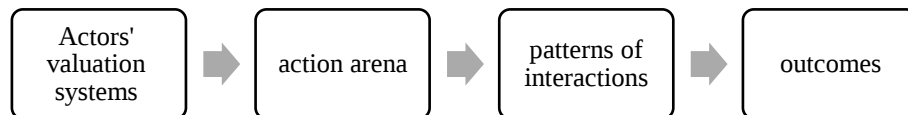
The authors of the article "Narrative Policy Framework" conclude by emphasizing: "Perhaps one day we will write a philosophical defense of our commitments, but not today. For now, we only propose the idea that science and liberal democracy are worth defending. NPF should not remain neutral toward these positions, and thus, in the coming years, we call for more studies that incorporate liberal democratic norms into NPF's ongoing commitment to science. Given that narratives play a fundamental role in the rise of authoritarian populism and the decline of liberal democracy, a better understanding of how authoritarian populists appeal to the working class and how liberal democracy can better use narrative to its advantage seems essential" (Jones et al., 2023).

9. Role of Values in the Policy Process from the Perspective of the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) Framework

9-1. Actors' Value Systems and Their Impact on Policy (Decisions)

One of the pillars of the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework is the "action arena." The term action arena refers to the social space where individuals interact, exchange goods and services, solve problems, dominate one another, or engage in conflict (among many activities individuals undertake in action arenas). One of the components of analyzing an action arena is the actors. To accurately understand actors, various parameters must

be identified, one of which is their value system (Ostrom, 2007). In fact, an actor's value system influences the quality of the action arena and ultimately, through the patterns of actor interactions, impacts the final outcome, which, in this context, is a decision or policy.



9-2. Values and the Culture of the Target Society and Their Impact on the Action Arena

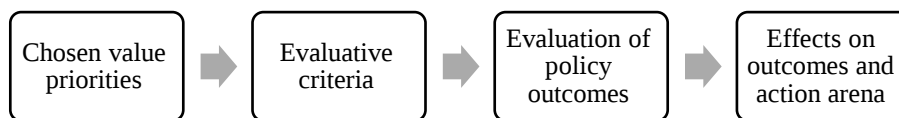
One of the factors influencing the action arena is the "attributes of the community". The components of a community include "norms," "culture," and "worldview" (Schlager & Villamayor-Tomas, 2023). Community characteristics relevant to structuring an action arena include generally accepted behavioral norms, the level of shared understanding among potential participants about the structure of specific types of action arenas, the degree of homogeneity in the preferences of those living in the community, and the distribution of resources among those affected. The term "culture" is often used for this set of variables. For example, when all users of a shared resource share common values and interact within a complex set of arrangements, they are far more likely to develop appropriate rules and norms for resource management. The importance of building a reputation for adhering to commitments is high in such a community, and the cost of developing monitoring and enforcement mechanisms is relatively low. If users of a resource come from different communities and distrust one another, the task of formulating and sustaining effective rules becomes significantly more challenging (Ostrom, 2007).



9-3. Values as Evaluation Criteria for Outcomes

The interaction processes within an operational situation and the outcomes produced may be evaluated using criteria similar to those used in many public policy analyses, such as efficiency, effectiveness, equity, and accountability. Each criterion has multiple definitions. For example, equity may mean that all actors in an operational situation receive an equal share of an asset, or it may mean that the amounts received are a function of the level of investment in

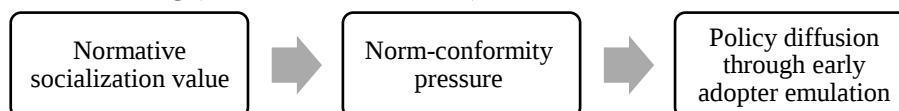
providing a good, or the amounts received may be based on need. The type of "equity" chosen by policymakers affects who receives what and how, impacts institutional design, and influences actors' choices and actions. Thus, institutional arrangements not only support the realization of instrumental values, such as efficiently solving collective action problems, but also normative values like justice or security (Schlager & Villamayor-Tomas, 2023). In addition to predicting outcomes, institutional analysts can evaluate the outcomes achieved and the range of potential outcomes achievable under different institutional arrangements. Evaluation criteria apply to both outcomes and the processes of achieving them. While there are potentially many evaluation criteria, let us briefly focus on the following: (1) economic efficiency, (2) equity through financial equalization, (3) redistributive equity, (4) accountability, (5) alignment with public ethics, and (6) adaptability (Ostrom, 2007).



10. Role of Values in the Policy Process from the Perspective of Policy Diffusion and Innovation

10-1. Socialization Values and Their Impact on Emulating Good Behavior Creators

Policies (and the ideas that shape them) can spread through a socialization mechanism. The development and adoption of behavioral norms create conditions for policy diffusion. For example, if countries in a region can be convinced to adopt a common security norm, their defense spending levels and foreign policies may be adjusted and perhaps harmonized. Similarly, socialization regarding the urgency of action on global climate change can lead to faster diffusion of green energy policies. When a shared view of what constitutes "good behavior" for governments is accepted, early adopters are quickly emulated by governments that do not want to appear inconsistent or norm-violating (de Oliveira et al., 2023).



10-2. Impact of Value and Ideological Similarity Between Countries on Policy Diffusion

Policy diffusion is not solely influenced by geographic proximity. For example, when Dallas designed a package of policies to become an attractive

location for Amazon's new headquarters, it competed with Atlanta, Boston, and Los Angeles, not just Houston and Austin. State governments learn from experiments conducted across the country, and countries learn from the experiences of other countries worldwide. Indeed, recent research on policy diffusion among U.S. states shows that other considerations, such as ideological similarity, better explain policy spread today than geographic proximity. The policy diffusion literature identifies several factors specific to certain locations that can either limit or facilitate the implementation of policies from elsewhere. These factors include program complexity, past policy choices, institutional and structural constraints, ideological proximity, or "cultural proximity" (de Oliveira et al., 2023).



10-3. Value-Based Assumptions as the Core of Policy Learning Validity

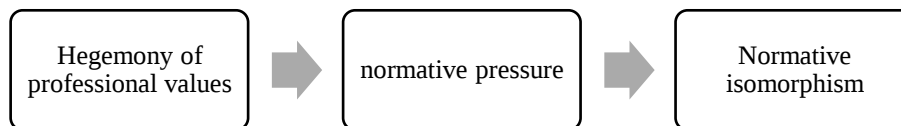
Rose (1993) argues: "Citing another country's name as an argument for or against a program is not lesson-drawing but rather playing a symbol in political rhetoric. Lesson-drawing cannot be politically neutral, as every program has a set of value-based assumptions, and policy is about conflicting goals and values. Consequently, the greater the alignment between policymakers' values and the program's values, the more likely the program can be transferred between two countries" (Danaifard, 2016: 204-206). Such transfers are more likely to succeed in the destination country, unlike cases where the necessary value alignment is absent.



10-4. Professional Values as the Basis for Normative Isomorphism

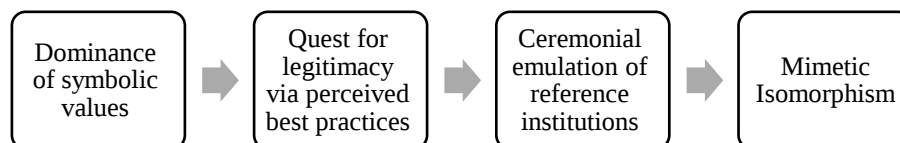
When policymakers consider themselves committed to a set of professional standards and values, they feel obligated to act according to them. In such cases, the basis for compliance is adherence to the principles governing the community of specialists in that field. Behaviors such as striving to obtain licenses, certifications, or meeting certain standards are indicators of such normative isomorphism. In this context, policymakers feel morally obligated to adhere to those professional or socio-political values (Danaifard, 2016: 218-219). There is "normative

pressure" on state officials to adopt best practices from other states. State officials are typically socialized into shared norms through common professional training (e.g., a master's degree in public administration) and interactions in professional associations (e.g., the National Emergency Management Association) (Berry & Berry, 2007).



10-5. Symbolic values drive mimetic isomorphism

In the policy literature, "mimetic isomorphism" has received more attention than the other two types of isomorphism—coercive and normative. Marsh and Sharman define mimetic isomorphism as: "The process of copying external models due to symbolic or normative factors, not for technical or rational reasons or functional efficiency." Governments adopt behaviors and institutions of governments perceived as more advanced or models proposed by international organizations to be regarded as advanced by others and themselves. Mimicry can be a deliberate tactic by governments to gain legitimacy. That is, a government may fully know that a policy in question is technically ineffective, but still assigns greater value to its social outcomes among domestic and international audiences (Danaifard, 2016: 219).



11. Role of Values in the Policy Process from the Perspective of the Ecology of Games Framework

11-1. Actors' Values as a Key Determinant of Outcomes

As previously mentioned, one of the key elements in the Ecology of Games Framework is the actors. Policy actors are individuals or organizations (e.g., government agencies, businesses, non-profits) that have interests in a specific issue area and are active in making decisions that affect it. Actors within and between systems have their own values, belief systems, policy preferences, resources, and decision-making strategies. Similarly, policy actors typically control various resources, such as funding, knowledge, and political power, which must be

coordinated in policy implementation. In line with other policy process theories, EGF asserts that policy actors are boundedly rational and influenced by motivational reasoning and cultural cognition processes. Thus, collaboration is often based on shared values and information processing that reinforces existing beliefs. From this perspective, policy actors often form coalitions similar to those proposed in the Advocacy Coalition Framework (Lubell, Mewhirter, & Robbins, 2023).



12. Conclusion

As observed, values play a highly significant and distinctive role in describing and analyzing the public policy process. Based on the theories discussed in the frameworks, it can be said that the values of policymakers, political authorities, policy entrepreneurs, professional communities, and the socio-political-cultural values of society all play a role in this regard. The impact of these values manifests in various aspects, which are briefly summarized in the table below.

Framework/Theory	Role of Values
Multiple Streams Framework - MSF	Reconfiguration of societal values - Challenging norms governing state-society relations - Growing ambiguity - Increasing imperative to apply the MSF
	Influence on Problem Definition
	Policy Entrepreneur Values-Problem-Solution Coupling
	Value Alignment Between Policy Entrepreneurs and Policymakers - Enhanced Policy Entrepreneur Access to Policymakers - Increased Policy Entrepreneur Effectiveness
	Policymaking Community's Values - Value Acceptability of policy alternative - Survival likelihood of policy alternatives
	Policymakers' Values - Solution Selection
Punctuated Equilibrium Theory - PET	Entanglement of policy image with core political values - Policy monopoly - Negative (dampening) feedback to pressures - Stability or incremental change
	Shift in attention to policy values - Breakdown of policy monopoly and emergence of new actors - Formation of new policy subsystem with alternative value sets - Policy

Framework/Theory	Role of Values
	punctuations
Social Construction of Reality & Policy Design	• Policymakers' Values vs. Societal Values - The process of understanding facts and interpreting their meanings - Issue Prioritization - Agenda-Setting for Priority Issues
	• Policy design - Social constructions - Value reproduction or transformation - Target group characterization (positive/negative) - Impact on meaning-making and civic participation
	• Dominant societal values - Differential targeting of social groups by elected officials - Determining the distinctive nature of policy design
Advocacy Coalition Framework - ACF	• Core socio-cultural values - Shaping relatively stable parameters that govern actors' resources and constraints - Influencing policy participants' behavioral patterns
	• Altruistic Values - Individual Behavior
	• Normative beliefs - Creating perceptual filters in relation to the world - Different perceptions of the same information - Increased density of bonds within the coalition and conflict with rival coalitions
	• fundamental normative values and ontological principles - deep core beliefs - Normative and empirical policy core beliefs - policy core beliefs - Coalition formation - Translating beliefs into policy - Production of policy outputs
Policy Feedback Theory	• Policy Feedback Framework as a Tool for Evaluating Governance Performance Against Desired Values
	• Values embedded in past policies - policy design - Rules and procedures - Interpretive effects - Shaping norms, values and attitudes - civic predisposition - civic engagement
Narrative Policy Framework - NPF	• Belief system - Interpretation of socially constructed policy objects - Contingent meaning-making in policy narratives
	• Attributes of belief systems - Advocacy coalition's power, cohesion, and stability - Narrative dominance probability in policy outcomes
	• Value-based and normative orientation for future studies, and the potential use of narrative framework for value-laden purposes
Institutional Analysis and	• Actors' valuation systems - action arena - patterns of interactions - outcomes

Framework/Theory	Role of Values
Development - IAD	• norms, culture, and worldview - attributes of the community • action arena - patterns of interactions - outcomes
	• Chosen value priorities - Evaluative criteria - Evaluation of policy outcomes - Effects on outcomes and action arena
Policy Diffusion & Innovation	• Normative socialization value - Norm-conformity pressure - Policy diffusion through early adopter emulation
	• ideological-cultural alignment of jurisdictions - Accelerated policy diffusion velocity
	• Value congruence among policymakers across political jurisdictions - Policy lesson-drawing - Policy success in the recipient jurisdiction
	• Hegemony of professional values - normative pressure - Normative isomorphism
	• Dominance of symbolic values - Quest for legitimacy via perceived best practices - Ceremonial emulation of reference institutions - Mimetic Isomorphism
Ecology of Games Framework	• Policy actors' value systems - Normatively-framed information processing - Normative coalition-building - Collaborative governance around shared values - Policy outcomes

This study, through a comprehensive analysis of the role of values in eight theoretical frameworks of the policy process and the identification of 28 distinct effects of values, demonstrates that values function not merely as background factors but as active and decisive elements in all stages of the policymaking process. From problem definition in the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) to the reproduction of norms in feedback theory, values dynamically influence decisions, coalitions, and policy outcomes.

In response to the study's central question—"Are policy propositions solely based on objective facts?"—it can be emphatically stated that policy science, contrary to the claims of positivists, has never been divorced from values. Even in seemingly objective frameworks like the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) or policy diffusion, professional, ideological, and cultural values undeniably shape solution selection and their acceptance. This conclusion aligns with Popper's and Chalmers' critiques of the "value-ladenness of theories."

Recognizing the importance of values in policymaking can have three practical implications for policymakers. First, designing sustainable and

successful policies requires understanding the value system of society and stakeholders, as well as incorporating these values at various stages. As discussed, the component of values influences all phases of policymaking, including agenda-setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy evaluation.

A second practical implication is that policymakers must identify and manage conflicts between different values (such as individual vs. collective values or professional vs. ideological values). Additionally, given the role of values in shaping identity and civic engagement, policies should be designed to account for the values of the target community.

Since one of the foundations of producing religious knowledge is the study of axiology (value theory), understanding how values influence a particular field of study can greatly help in aligning its findings with religious concepts and teachings.

Although this study broadly covered the impact of values in dominant policy process theories, it has limitations that pave the way for future research. First, it did not systematically distinguish between different types of values (fundamental, professional, symbolic, ideological) or their levels of analysis (individual, group, institutional, societal). Paying attention to these distinctions could lead to a better understanding of policymaking dynamics.

Second, this study did not specifically address value conflicts among different policy actors. For example, the values of policy entrepreneurs (in MSF) may conflict with those of elected officials (in Punctuated Equilibrium Theory—PET) or bureaucrats (in IAD). Similarly, the values of target communities (in the social construction of reality) may differ from those of political elites. Studying these conflicts could lead to a more realistic understanding of the policy process.

Given the influential role of values in policymaking, it is recommended that the process of value formation itself be studied. Additionally, solutions should be proposed to resolve value conflicts and prioritize values beneficial to society, ensuring policies align with religious values and achieve appropriate outcomes.

In summary, this study, from a post-positivist perspective, demonstrated that policymaking is not a purely rational process but rather an arena of value interaction, conflict, and redefinition. As Delanty (2005) notes, modern science cannot claim neutrality; instead, it must acknowledge the role of values as an inseparable part of knowledge production. This perspective, particularly in social sciences and policymaking, not only contributes to a more realistic understanding of the policy process but also lays the groundwork for designing more responsive and equitable policies.

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