

## POLICY MAKING MODELS AND THEIR ROLE IN POLICY EDUCATION

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The purposes of this paper are to (1) review commonly used models of policy making and discuss their applications in policy education and (2) summarize recent developments in research and theory and speculate about their implications for policy education.

### Commonly Used Models

The following models are those covered in standard textbooks on public policy (e.g., Anderson; Dye).

*Institutionalism.* This is the traditional, “classical” approach. The focus is on the structures, organization, duties and functions of governmental institutions. Policies are sometimes described, but never analyzed. Institutionalism has its application in policy education through the use of organization charts. Though often uninteresting to audiences, organization charts have the advantage of addressing basic questions that anyone who wishes to be politically influential needs to answer: What unit of government or agency is responsible for what? What are the lines of authority and accountability?

*Systems Theory.* Systems theory emphasizes the environment of political systems, input and outputs (generally in the form of demands and support on the one hand and public policies on the other) and feedback. The systems framework is widely used, but often implicitly. It can be helpful in counteracting the tendency to describe or analyze political systems as if they were self-contained. The fallacy of doing so is clearest at the local level, but may prove most costly nationally. If systems theory (or some other framework) can help people understand external linkages and how to influence them or respond to them, educators should make more use of these models.

*Pluralism.* Group theory, the most common version of pluralism used to explain national political behavior, interprets policy making as the result of influence by groups. At the local level, there is less emphasis on groups, but influential individuals are perceived as diverse, conflicting and different from one issue to another. Conflict

and competition have prominent roles in this model. It is recognized that not all interests are organized or influential, but there is a tendency to assume a "frictionless transition" from shared interests to formation of an effective group (Henig). In policy education, pluralist models are especially helpful in emphasizing the diversity of participants and interests, the likelihood of conflict and the importance of willingness to work on conflict resolution.

*Elitism.* This model recognizes that most people are uninvolved and uninfluential. Policy making on most issues is heavily influenced by elites. Although it may be assumed that elites act in the interests of others (as well as themselves), elections are considered largely symbolic, with elites often described as manipulating public opinion rather than being influenced by it. Despite the undeniable presence of conflict within the elite, its members are assumed to share a fundamental consensus. Influence is often exercised behind the scenes. In policy education, elite models help emphasize inequalities among those who participate in policy making or experience its outcomes. In different hands, these disparities are attributed to apathy on the part of the masses or manipulation by elites.

*Process Models.* Process models attempt to generalize about the sequence of steps or actions that occur as policy issues are raised, debated and resolved. They focus more on what happens, when and how than on who the participants are and why particular outcomes occur. A typical example includes the stages of problem identification, proposal formulation, program legitimation, program budgeting, program implementation, program evaluation and problem resolution/program termination (Jones). Process models are widely used in policy education. They help answer obviously pressing questions such as, "Where do we start?" and "What happens next?"

*Rationalism.* Anderson treats rationalism and incrementalism as models of *decision making*, rather than *policy making*, on grounds that they have a narrower focus. Both have had considerable influence on process models. Rationalism attempts to describe a process of efficient decision making. It typically includes the stages of clarifying and ranking goals, identifying an array of alternatives for reaching the goals, predicting the consequences of each alternative, comparing the anticipated consequences of the various alternatives and selecting the alternative that maximizes the attainment of goals. Rationalism has been criticized for being unrealistic in terms of information and analytical requirements and unable to deal with situations in which goals are unknown or in dispute. It treats decision making as an intellectual process rather than a political one.

*Incrementalism.* The incremental model was formulated in reaction to rationalism and offered as a prescriptive model as well as a better description of reality. It states that decision makers are more likely to move away from problems than toward goals; only a limited number of alternatives are considered (specifically, ones that differ only

marginally from the status quo); only direct, short-range consequences are considered for each alternative; only enough analysis is done to find a solution that policy makers can agree on; and adjustments are continually made if solutions remain unacceptable.

I have an image of the political system as a mountain, and these models are pictures of the mountain from different angles and distances. *Institutionalism* is a drawing showing the geological structure of the mountain without the plants, animals and human activity occurring on it. *Systems theory* is a photograph taken with a wide-angle lens, or perhaps an aerial photograph, helpful in seeing the mountain's relationship with its surroundings. *Elitism* is a straightforward snapshot in which the mountain's peak-like summit, steep sides and vegetation zones are plainly visible. *Pluralism* is a closer view, taken perhaps by someone who is climbing the mountain, in which we lose sight of the simpler geometry of the elite view and are impressed instead by a confusion of cliffs, canyons, trees, boulders and multiple summits. *Process models*, despite the typical analogy, are not like motion pictures. In a movie, we see the same content as in a snapshot, but enjoy the addition of movement. In process models, we see movement and change, but lose most of the content. We lose the geological structure, the surroundings, the general shape of the mountain and the details.

None of the models give a complete impression of the mountain. For that we need all of them (and possibly more). The same is true of people's understanding of a political system. *Education for Public Decisions* (House and Young) is right to recommend a repertoire of models. It would bother me, however, to think of them as alternatives that educators draw on as needed or as they feel comfortable. I am more inclined to think that we need all of them (or at least several) or that we need to develop new models that reconcile and integrate aspects of various existing ones.

In the remainder of this paper I will focus on three models—process, elitism and pluralism. These are the models that *Education for Public Decisions* covers. They provide a reasonable cross-section. We need process models as well as the others because they address different questions—what, when and how, rather than who and why. We need elite models because the diversity of interests involved in policy making is not as complete as pluralism implies, nor is the conflict among them as equally balanced. We need pluralist models because consensus at the top is not as great as elitism implies, nor is the elite as secure from challenge. Reality is elusive, hard to capture in a simple model, perhaps best described by the concept of “competitive elites” (Gamson) or the analogy of the American political system as, not a pyramid, but a plateau with a flat top and steep sides (Wolff).

## Process Models and Policy Education

In looking for recent developments vis-a-vis process models, it occurs to me that these models have rarely captured the attention of researchers. They are widely used, but mainly as "how-to-do-it" guidelines or organizing devices for the chapters of a textbook. Their descriptive accuracy or explanatory power has rarely been tested. Interesting recent developments have taken place in the area of theory and prescription rather than research.

The principal development is the search for alternatives to the rational model. One place where this is clear is in the literature on planning. Rationalism is taught most frequently in planning schools and used most frequently by planners to describe their work if not actually guide it. Yet criticisms are as widespread as its use. The literature on planning theory is full of efforts and admonitions to develop a new model. Several alternatives have been offered, among them incrementalism, advocacy planning, transactive planning and ecological and structural radicalism (Hudson). Each of these can be thought of as an effort to provide guidance on the political side of planning: "Accommodate the tendency of the political system to make only small changes at a time" (incrementalism); "Help less influential groups have an equal voice in policy making" (advocacy); "Collaborate with policy makers in determining goals and make your technical work part of a mutual learning process" (transactive planning); "Eliminate relationships of power and hierarchy" (ecological radicalism); "Make your planning work responsive to the underlying structural dimensions of power" (structural radicalism).

So far, however, none of the models has proven sufficiently compelling to replace rationalism as the dominant paradigm (de Neufville; Alexander). They promise too little (in the case of incrementalism, which seems unduly tolerant of our tendency to "stagger through history like a drunk putting one disjointed incremental foot after another" (Boulding, p. 931), deliver too little (in the case of advocacy, which failed to resolve the paradox of governmental support for planners who challenged government) or seem excessively vague or unrealistic (the transactive and radical models).

*Implications for Policy Education.* What I think is needed in planning is a model that differs from rationalism by incorporating politics, but doesn't throw the baby out with the bath. The planner's most compelling resource is systematically gathered, analyzed and interpreted information. Planners need a model that shows how the technical side of their work is or should be combined with the political side. Such a model would need to show how the political dimension of one's work dictates the choice of methods and how the technical work, in turn, affects the political process and its outcomes. For me at least the transactive model has the most promise. It portrays planners as engaged in transactive relationships with both pol-

icy makers and citizens (Friedmann). Planners bring technical knowledge to the relationships while policy makers and citizens bring personal knowledge. In addition, planners facilitate a process whereby technical and personal knowledge are combined and citizens, policy makers and planners work together on goals as well as means in a process of mutual learning.

Such a model can be readily translated from planners to educators. It would pose two important challenges. One is to refine our ability to combine the contributions of "subject-matter" and "process" experts in designing and conducting educational programs. We often keep the two separate. Subject-matter education often fails to include the provision of process skills in leadership or policy making, while process education is conducted independently of specific issues (or deals with issues on which extension lacks subject-matter expertise). Another challenge is to design and conduct educational programs with an interplay between education and action: repeated opportunities for citizens and policy makers to take action on the basis of what they have learned and then come back for additional education. The issue evolution/educational intervention model (House and Young) can be used as a basis for developing both of these ideas.

### **Pluralism, Elitism and Policy Education**

In contrast to process models, pluralism and elitism have dominated the attention of researchers. I see three recent developments with implications for policy education.

#### **Attention to Implications for Citizens**

In Walton's commentary on the community power literature that developed in the wake of Hunter's 1953 study of Atlanta, Walton observes that social scientists have lost sight of Hunter's original motivation to study "the origins of public policy and strategic points of access" (p. 297). Hunter's primary concern was that policies that "appear to be manipulated to the advantage of relatively few" are enacted "with no precise knowledge on the part of the majority of citizens as to how these policies originated or by whom they are really sponsored" (p. 295). Subsequent research took a different tack, however, becoming preoccupied with the identity and behavior of key policy makers or influentials and offering little insight into implications for ordinary citizens or strategies for citizen action.

In my opinion, the best source of insight into citizen action is provided by the literature on social movements. Researchers have studied how movements for or against change emerge, recruit followers, generate commitment and influence public values, opinions and policies (Garner; Hahn). Few writers, however, have made explicit connections between social movements and power structures—how

movements change power structures, or how power structures give rise to movements and obstruct or promote their success (Heasley).

Negative consequences of inattention to implications for citizens do not fall only on citizens. We have witnessed a two-decade record of declining trust, efficacy and participation. Such conditions have high potential for negative consequences for the system in general and for policy makers and the interests they represent in particular. Yankelevich contrasts the nation's prompt response to Sputnik in the 1950s with the failure to gain public respect for the seriousness of the problem of oil shortages during the OPEC oil embargo. "The breakdown . . . happened because a widespread lack of trust in government and big business had led many people to assume that the two powers were in collusion to jack up gas prices and increase the profits of the oil companies" (p. 27). Yankelevich suggests that the same thing is likely to happen on other issues.

*Implications for policy education.* In addition to the need for new models that emphasize the connections between citizens and policy makers, we need to do a more deliberate job of educating both groups on the same topics. We frequently provide policy makers with subject-matter education on policy issues. How often do we provide the same information to citizens? If we do educate citizens on the same topics, do we really give them opportunities to learn about policy issues and policy making processes or simply teach them what they can do as individuals or families to solve policy problems that other people have defined? When we offer policy education programs for citizens how often do we fail to connect process assistance with specific issues (and consequently attract small audiences and reach mostly people who are already reasonably knowledgeable)? And how often do we fail to do even that, fearing that we will antagonize policy makers if our efforts happen to be successful?

The Cornell Planning Matrix (House and Young) is designed to help educators plan "comprehensive" educational programs that focus on specific issues and include appropriate components for citizens and policy makers. One example is Housing Options for Seniors Today (HOST) (Pollak, et al. 1986; Pollak and Gorman 1987). In "consumer workshops," older people and their families learn about various options for older people's housing (accessory apartments, home sharing, etc.) and about relevant policy issues, such as possible need for new agencies or programs or for changes in zoning ordinances before certain options are available. In "professional updates," personnel in human service agencies, church groups, civic associations and other organizations learn about the housing situations and problems of older people, about the various options and about the policy issues and what organizations like theirs can do to help. In workshops on "removing regulatory barriers," local government officials and planners obtain the technical information necessary for making changes in zoning ordinances or other regulations if they wish to do so.

## **Recognition of the Importance of Agenda Setting**

The concept of agenda setting is not a new development. Schattschneider noted that the way in which issues were formulated had a great effect on who became involved and who didn't. Bachrach and Baratz criticized pluralism for ignoring the second of "two faces of power;" the ability to prevent unwanted outcomes by keeping potentially threatening issues off the agenda (or manipulating the way issues are defined). Pluralist research like Dahl's 1961 study of New Haven was based on the assumption that one ought to study actual behavior in connection with specific issues (rather than mere reputations, as earlier research leading to elitist conclusions had done). Neo-elitists argued, however, that in doing so the pluralists completely missed the opportunity to study the second face of power: the ability to keep unwanted issues from arising in the first place.

Beginning in the late 1970s, several studies provided empirical support for many of the neo-elitists' assertions. Domhoff (1978a), for example, reanalyzed one of Dahl's issues and provides evidence that business leaders had much more influence in New Haven than Dahl indicated. Prior to the time period covered by Dahl's study, Chamber of Commerce leaders devised plans for downtown redevelopment, developed a workable consensus within the business community and communicated their plans to local government. The plans carried out by public officials, as described by Dahl, were almost exactly the ones developed by the business leaders a decade earlier.

Domhoff (1978b) argues that business leaders play a large role in shaping future agendas, doing so through Chambers of Commerce and similar organizations at the local level and such organizations as the Committee on Economic Development, Business Roundtable or U.S. Chamber of Commerce at the national level. These "policy planning organizations" are not necessarily influential in the "helter-skelter" of special-interest politics. But they provide opportunities for business leaders to "familiarize themselves with general issues in a relaxed and off-the-record setting"; resolve conflicts and work out compromises within the business community; shape the "climate of opinion" in the country or community at large through "books, journals, policy statements, press releases and speakers' bureaus"; and communicate informally with public officials.

Evidence that policy makers ignore issues that would be threatening to dominant interests is reported in studies by Crenson and Gaventa. Crenson shows how city officials in Gary, Indiana, where U.S. Steel was the city's major employer and taxpayer, either failed to act on proposals for air pollution regulation or passed essentially toothless legislation. Gaventa reports that in Clear Fork Valley, an Appalachian coal mining community, public debate was confined to "such things as a low tax rate, distribution of beer licenses and the renovation of the courthouse" (p. 137), while undertaxation of the

mining companies, reclamation of strip-mined land and inadequate housing never reached the agenda. As Gaventa emphasizes, control over the agenda not only maintains power, but also discourages participation by people who might become involved if issues they cared about were on the agenda (see also Lukes).

*Implications for Policy Education.* The main implication for policy educators is that we can be accused of contributing to prevailing biases if we educate only on issues that are already on the agenda (or accept prevailing definitions of the issues). We need policy education programs that begin before issues reach the agenda. We should begin with whatever concerns are on people's minds, regardless of whether they have been acknowledged as issues or not. Rather than finding ways to convince people that they ought to take an interest in existing issues, we need to let them indicate what is bothering them, what they care about, what they are worried about. Then see if there are policy dimensions to their concerns, if there are potential actions by agencies, business firms, interest groups or public policy makers that could help resolve their concerns. If there are (and there almost always will be), then we should help people learn about these newly discovered policy issues, understand how the relevant decisions are made (with special attention to how issues get on the agenda), and acquire the skills necessary for effective participation.

At Cornell, we are taking a step in this direction by trying to incorporate policy education in existing subject-matter programs. In HOST, people who come to learn about housing options may also learn that new programs or agencies have to be created before certain options are available or that other options are currently prohibited by zoning regulations (Pollak, et al. 1986). In programs on drinking water quality, people who come to learn how to have their water tested or what treatment devices to buy also learn how water quality standards are established and enforced and how land-use controls can be used to protect water supplies (Lemley).

There is also a burgeoning literature on "empowerment" that ought to be helpful. Empowerment is defined as "an interactive process through which people experience personal and social change, enabling them to achieve influence over the organizations and institutions that affect their lives and the communities in which they live" (Whitmore, p. 4). Some approaches to empowerment remain at the interpersonal level, leading to increases in confidence and self-esteem, but leaving questions about their impact on public issues (Greene). Many of the most effective approaches, including ones used in the United States, are based on the work of Paolo Friere in Brazil. The basic assumption of these approaches is that "people will act on the issues on which they have strong feelings. All educational projects should start by identifying the issues that local people speak about with excitement, hope, fear, anxiety or anger" (Hope and Timmel, p. 8). For a U.S. example see Coover, et al. These approaches



begin with a “listening survey” in which teams of facilitators and local people identify the themes that people in a community care about deeply. The themes are then translated into “codes”—pictures, stories, songs or plays, for example—that pose problems familiar in the lives of local people. The idea is not to present solutions, but to raise questions that are then explored through dialogue between facilitator and participants (p. 55). The dialogue moves through such questions as: What do you see happening in the picture? Why is it happening? Does this happen in real life? What problems does it lead to? What are the root causes of these problems? What can we do about it? (p. 60).

### **Criticism of the Constraining Influence of Prevailing Values**

Lukes argues that power has not only two faces but a third dimension as well: the capacity to shape or maintain a value system that discourages people from perceiving situations as problems deserving public attention. Gaventa illustrates the point in his study of the Clear Fork Valley. Domination of the local culture by coal mining companies began in the 1880s when they acquired most of the land. Today, the people of the valley know that most of the land was acquired in unjust ways and that monopoly of land ownership is the major obstacle to improvement of living and working conditions. Even though serious grievances about poverty, inequality and environmental demise were “not hard to discover,” the unequal distribution of land was “often . . . accepted as a natural, ineradicable fact of the social structure” (p. 55). Most other degradations and inequalities were accepted in the same way. Many potential issues were not raised or even recognized as issues. The raising or recognizing of issues was inhibited by assumptions that decisions by the mining companies should not be challenged, that criticism of the status quo was “socialistic” or “communistic” and that people should not engage in activity likely to lead to conflict or unpleasantness.

In the early 1960s it was argued that we had reached the end of ideology—a fundamental consensus that made deep social and political cleavages and ideological conflict a thing of the past or an affliction suffered only in other parts of the world. Ideologies were likely to be defined as “simplification(s) of complex problems, erroneous interpretations or deliberate distortions of reality, or . . . psychological prop(s) for the intellectually or emotionally maladapt” (Bouchier, p. 10). Today they are more likely to be defined simply as explanations of “(1) how the present social, economic, and political order operates, (2) why this is so, and whether it is good or bad, and (3) what should be done about it, if anything” (Dolbeare and Dolbeare, p. 1). In these terms, liberalism or capitalism are ideologies no less than socialism or communism. Ideologies can be necessary ingredients in the mobilization of social movements, but can also contribute

to the third dimension of power by promoting pride and patriotism and discouraging the recognition of problems or perception of them as potential public issues.

If those who benefit from the failure to raise certain issues did nothing to create or sustain the conditions from which they benefit, we could dismiss this line of argument as nothing more than the grumbling of frustrated radicals. But those who benefit from the status quo are not necessarily innocent. They may invoke the symbols of "socialism" or "un-Americanism" to discourage or disparage their critics. They may insist on peaceful adherence to the "rules of the game" even when other people are disadvantaged by the rules. They may actively and consciously shape or reinforce the symbols and values from which they benefit. As Domhoff (1978a) argues, corporations, foundations and national business organizations work hard to create a climate of opinion favorable to business. These efforts do not create a consensus in favor of the status quo, but do maintain confusion and doubt about the credibility of competing messages. In Domhoff's words, they "help ensure that an alternative view does not consolidate to replace the resigned acquiescence and disinterest . . . of Americans at the lower levels of the socioeconomic ladder" (p. 192).

*Implications for policy education.* The implication is that we are wrong when we say that educators should stick with facts and leave values alone. Preston and Smith, writing about college teaching, argue that students need to be taught that values are necessary elements in empirical explanation and facts can be used in developing and justifying value claims. Whether it is a fact that "an election was held in November" depends in part on value judgments as to what an election ought to be. The event in November might have been a "plebiscite" or only "a mass exercise in digital dexterity" (p. 87). Likewise, a value claim like "democracy is better than rule by elites" can be tested against factual evidence regarding people's capacity for "acquiring political knowledge, making (or at least recognizing) informed policy recommendations, and reaching agreement on . . . important public issues" (p. 87). Students in Preston's classes are expected to justify their beliefs with arguments "that would be persuasive to all citizens" (p. 88). They are expected "to be familiar with the claims of conflicting political philosophies and to reach conclusions that reconcile diverse views" (p. 88). To Preston and Smith, the fact-value dichotomy is an "intellectual dead end" that ignores the central role of values in political life and turns its back on the "fundamental value problems that are central to our continued personal and collective survival" (p. 90).

Among adult educators, Mezirow (1981), borrowing ideas from German philosopher Jurgen Habermas, argues that adults need to acquire not only empirical knowledge and shared interpretations, but also "self-knowledge" in the sense of understanding the "psycho-cultural assumptions" that limit their expectations, awareness of op-

tions and ability to control their own lives. These assumptions include belief systems “uncritically assimilated in childhood” as well as psychological inhibitions “evoked from childhood traumas” (Mezirow 1985, pp. 144–45). Just as psychoanalysis can help people deal with the latter, Mezirow believes that similar assistance should be available to bring cultural assumptions “into critical consciousness” and enable people to take corrective action. As possible approaches, he cites Friere’s work with Brazilian peasants and support groups (feminist groups, for example) in which alternative perspectives are presented and learners are encouraged to apply insights to their own lives (p. 19).

It does not have to be assumed that such learning requires rejecting currently dominant values and ideologies or opting in favor of some particular alternative. The point is simply to enable people to move beyond the *uncritical, unthinking* acceptance of currently dominant values. Such learning would seem to involve at least two steps: becoming open to critical perspectives on currently dominant values and ideologies and becoming open to potential alternatives. To contribute to such learning, educators would have to reject the idea that they cannot deal with values.

Several possibilities occur to me. Imagine a workshop in which people are learning how to analyze policy alternatives. We might draw on the scientific methods (as the rational model does) to help them assess the factual dimensions of alternative proposals. We could also borrow tools from philosophy to help them critique the proposals’ value dimensions, testing the logic with which they are connected to higher-order values and the adequacy of their factual basis. Or suppose we offered workshops on “improving your policy arguments.” Policy arguments can be divided into “action statements” (proposals as to what should be done), “factual statements” and “value statements” (Hambrick and Snyder). Assistance could be offered on strengthening each of these. In the case of value statements, learners would be encouraged to assess the logic and factual basis of their value claims. In either of these examples, people would have the opportunity to think seriously about values they normally take for granted.

In order to facilitate openness to alternative values or ideologies, consider another possibility. When we outline alternatives and consequences regarding a particular policy issue, suppose we intentionally included those derived from an array of competing ideologies (such as the Dolbeares’ typology of liberalism, capitalism, populism, socialism, anarchism, black liberation, women’s liberation, Marxism and futurism). People would have their attention called to policy alternatives or interpretations of consequences that flow from a number of normally submerged perspectives.

## An Additional Implication

Controversy is inevitable in policy education. My recommendations would make matters worse. If we educate policy makers and citizens about the same issues, we will more frequently find ourselves caught in the middle between policy makers who resent increased citizen involvement and citizens who are antagonistic toward policy makers. If we enable citizens to raise their own issues—new ones not otherwise on the agenda—we are likely to antagonize influential interests who don't want some of these issues raised. If we prod people to reassess their values as well as their understanding of the facts, we are likely to run into criticism and will have an even less secure base to fall back on.

We need effective ways of enabling people to see and understand the other side of issues. Not only would they become more effective advocates, but truly “win-win” solutions might more often be discovered. Experience with mediating community disputes has produced a set of guidelines that could be adapted for use by educators: Include all relevant parties. Agree on the agenda and ground rules. Provide for obtaining necessary factual information. Develop an agreed-upon “negotiation text” as a point of departure. Clarify and understand the various parties’ *interests* (rather than debating their *positions*). Focus on the problem and avoid personal attacks. Invent “agreement packages” that can satisfy each party’s interests (Madigan, et al.).

Mathews, in describing the philosophy behind the National Issues Forums, provides an articulate statement of desirable objectives. The forums deal with controversial issues and encourage participants to engage in a process of “working through” the issues. They are not necessarily expected to reach agreement, but to engage in “representative thinking” and attain “public knowledge.” Representative thinking is thinking that includes the viewpoints of others. It leads to “public judgment,” the shift from one’s initial opinions on an issue to “second opinions,” which arise after one has listened to other people’s arguments and perspectives. Public knowledge is knowledge, not of what *I* think and what *you* think, but of what *we* think—what we as a group agree on and where we disagree. As Mathews observes, there are many opportunities for “partisan talk,” but few for “talk about the common ground.”

The model that policy educators need to work on, as I see it, is a combination of empowerment and conflict management. One without the other is insufficient. Empowerment without conflict management can lead to chaos (and cost us our jobs in the process). Conflict management without empowerment will produce unequal outcomes that ignore the second and third dimensions of power.

A number of years ago, Brody described what he called “the puzzle of public participation in America.” He wondered why participation

rates were declining during a time when education levels—consistently the variable most closely correlated with participation—were increasing. I think I have solved the puzzle. The public has indeed become better educated and capable of a more sophisticated role in the political system. People have progressed from blind faith to awareness of public problems and inadequate responses to them. But the political system has lagged in adapting to the public's greater intelligence and capability. Channels for public involvement have not been improved, nor have mechanisms been created to help people refine their understanding of public issues (beyond the flood of undigested facts they receive from the news media). The result is frustration and withdrawal.

The political system needs a new way of doing business. We need policy makers who respect the public's intelligence and are willing to engage in mutual learning. We need policy makers and citizens who recognize disagreement as a normal element in a diverse population. We need citizens who will try to understand the other side and assist policy makers in the search for mutually satisfactory solutions. Creating such changes is our challenge as policy educators.

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