DEMOCRATIC FOUNDATIONS
OF THE POLICY SCIENCES

Democracy is the theory that the common people know what they want, and deserve to get it good and hard.


Introduction

According to most observers, Harold D. Lasswell was the originator of the systematic intellectual endeavor that came to be known as the “policy sciences,” although, of course, policymakers have been given informal advice since the snake whispered into Eve’s ear. In its earliest articulation, he drew directly upon the heritage of the American pragmatist philosopher John Dewey and Lasswell’s University of Chicago mentor, Charles Merriam, to define what he was to call the “policy sciences of democracy.” First broached publicly in 1949 in his *Power and Personality,* the intellectual formulation was designed to offer political decision-makers a markedly higher standard of information upon which to base their policies and programs. One of Lasswell’s doctoral students at Yale University, Ronald Brunner, has noted that the genesis of the policy sciences approach was to “accept resources from society as a whole on the promise that such resources will be used, in good faith, to improve policy decisions through scientific inquiry.” This charter specifically provides more systematic intelligence to improve the quality of governance in terms of both the policy-making process and the resulting end products.
The policy sciences were consciously intended to focus on vital issues in the political environment; in Lasswell's words, "The Policy [Sciences] approach does not imply that energy is to be dissipated on a miscellany of merely topical issues, but rather that fundamental and often neglected problems which arise in the adjustment of man in society are to be dealt with."

In this sense, their development was to be based on a problem (rather than on a single academic discipline) orientation, a multi- (as opposed to a solitary) disciplinary approach (since few social problems can be fairly viewed from a single disciplinary lens), and, pivotal in the context explored here, an explicitly normative (rather than value-neutral or value-free) procedure. Each of these stood in stark contrast to the standard academic approaches of the time.

When he and Daniel Lerner edited *The Policy Sciences* volume in 1951, Lasswell advanced an even more specific, highly normative mission for the field when he wrote that the "policy sciences of democracy . . . [were] directed towards knowledge needed to improve the practice of democracy." In 1950, Lasswell raised a concurrent (and equally pressing) theme of human dignity as part of his vision. With coauthor Abraham Kaplan, he proposed that the policy sciences were designed to provide "intelligence pertinent to the integration of values realized by and embodied by interpersonal relations [such as] human dignity and the realization of human capacities." These goals were almost surely established in part as a reaction to Lasswell's antipathies against the recently defeated fascist powers and their repeated affronts to human dignity and democratic values. Lasswell's observations were greatly heightened by his perception of the growing technical capabilities, influence, and the potential misuse of propaganda on the national level. (Lasswell had spent the years during World War II studying propaganda techniques and effects as a staff member of the Library of Congress.) These perceptions were reflected in the policy sciences sections found in the 1965 volume, also coedited with Lerner, *World Revolutionary Elites: Studies in Coercive Ideological Movements*.

However, since Lasswell's original pronouncements, one can legitimately inquire if these charters promoting democracy and human dignity have been fulfilled or really even honored within the policy sciences communities. More concretely for the immediate purposes, we shall inquire as to what "democracy" has come to mean for the policy sciences, both as a goal and as a process. This chapter examines the development of the normative foundations underlying the policy sciences' development as a function of democratic theory and practices over the last half century. Both avenues suggest that the policy sciences as theoretically constructed are not readily amenable to democratic—recall Carl Cohen's or even Lincoln's definitions—traditions, and procedures. Nor has Lasswell's concomitant plea for human dignity become a central (or even well-intentioned) calling card. We will emphasize that these shortfalls from the original visions are discernible on both the theoretical and applied planes.

We need also to ask generally after the approaches' accomplishments. As we have seen in the first chapter, we know that the policy sciences have not realized the early expectations ascribed by their enthusiasts. In this instance, we need to wonder if their successes or failures can likewise be tied to (or disassociated from) their democratic fundamentals. To achieve this, we divide the contemporary policy sciences into two major (although not mutually exclusive) streams originally proposed by Charles W. Anderson—the utilitarian branch (often espoused by systems analysts and economists) and the liberal rationalism branch (e.g., political scientists and lawyers' variations). The former branch, as we shall see, has been the pre-dominant application over the last forty years, as policy research has assumed the guise of applied economics. Anderson's division compares favorably with Mark Warren's split between the political philosophies he identifies as "standard liberal democracy" and "expansive democracy," Jane J. Mansbridge's unitary versus adversary democracies, and Michael Sandel's "liberal" and "republican" models, except in their respective nomenclatures.

**The Utilitarian Tradition**

Charles Anderson points out that the utilitarian tradition of democracy, initially derived from Jeremy Bentham's (1748–1832) writings, implies that all citizens can make their own independent, freely arrived at decisions, and the resulting opinion aggregation will, in a marketlike manner, produce balancing coalitions leading (if not always smoothly) to an equitable set of public policies. It is assumed (perhaps naively) by Bentham that each normal adult is naturally competent to calculate an optimum balance of personal satisfaction from among the opportunities present and the information available to that individual. It is assumed that this form of reason is regular, uniform, and universal. People can be relied upon to think in this way.
In true Madisonian fashion, the utilitarian position would argue that the polity must be constitutionally structured for the protection of the citizen and its governance practiced on the assumption of encouraging countervailing groups as a means of avoiding despotism, just as government similarly legitimates and protects the competitive marketplace from oppressive monopolies. The critical component of the utilitarian approach is the protection of individual rights from excessive governmental or other parties' interventions, although this security may not be as automatic or continuous as a process as one might imagine. Adam Smith's famous economic metaphor of the "hidden hand" economy would be translated into one having a political syntax, as perhaps group theory would have it, to investigate and then to regulate a utilitarian world.

However, citizens involved in "maximizing" their own personal utilities often conflict with one another as they "follow self-interest in ways to threaten the rights and liberties of other individuals." Self-interests were thought to result in a Hobbesian bellum omnium contra omnes (war of all against all) situation and, quite likely, lead to some level of civil unrest and a resulting need for an intervening governmental structure. To prevent civil conflict, Anderson contends, a political utilitarian orientation "must be organized and controlled, subordinated to a second [i.e., non-Hobbesian] scheme of reason, presumably vested in an elite thinking differently from the people themselves. And that is precisely the way utilitarianism works as a policy science."

Thus, unwittingly and probably unwittingly, the utilitarian approach resurfaces Madison's deepest autocratic dread—an unfeathered governmental few (political architects, if you will) imposing upon the personal prerogatives of the many (i.e., citizens) to prevent social conflict, always in the name of the protection of the collective. In addition, greater social goods—especially if subject to redistribution—are preferred to greater personal goods. In Anderson's trenchant summary,

The classic, if very peculiar, assumption of utilitarianism is that the only public thought that the self-interested calculators who are the citizens are able to entertain is that they would rather live in a society that offered more total satisfaction than less... Hence, the governors govern well if they follow a scheme of reason that increases to total utility available to the society.¹⁰

There are a host of reasons why this logic might be criticized beyond simple shortcomings of human nature. For instance, Anderson observes that the individual's capability to "construct a comprehensive, exhaustive, transitive calculus of personal utility... apart from social influence and persuasion" is usually lacking. Moreover, we need to remember that perfectly competitive markets (governed in nature by Smith's hidden hand) do not occur in the political arena nor are they maintained as a pleasant coincidence of nature; witness the aphorism, "politics make strange bedfellows." They require careful, deliberate structuring and monitoring by the polity if they are to live up to the theoretical and practical expectations in order to meet the expectations of the utilitarian goals.

However, let us assume for the sake of the theoretical argument that more munificent political reading is correct, that personal preferences aggregated into political statements can avoid conflict situations. Then one can easily see how the utilitarian interpretation of the policy sciences will, in practice, quickly distance itself from direct citizen participation, however "honorable" or trustworthy the intentions of the ruling few might be. This utilitarian orientation toward government would find that the parochial, individual citizen (especially in larger, unmonitored numbers) cannot themselves be trusted to reach an equitable estimation of the utilitarian catchword, "the greatest good for the greatest number." If all opinions are valued equally, then individual decisions within the society must be subjected to a majority rule vote, a process that is bound to have some occasional short-term disadvantages—with others of longer duration. As a result, citizen disappointment could have a more enduring, perhaps an eroding effect on the utilitarian position and its policies, as some find their interests consistently ignored or outvoted.

To carry out such a democratic charter, one needs to depend on a model of constitutional or social engineering to alleviate a systemic series of disappointments which, when, taken to extremes,

¹Recall Madison's letter to Jefferson: "Divide et impera, the reprobated axiom of tyranny, is under certain qualifications, the only policy by which a republic can be administered on just principles." ⁹

¹⁰The requirements of social diversity make the utilitarian approach even more difficult to encompass, a price many are willing to incur.
might be described as a despotic rule. This model is, of course, exactly what Madison offered. Madison's republic provided the new nation with a "political order, in which diverse factions, interests, and power-seekers would be held in stalemate, an equilibrium in which none could dominate, so that all must, in the end, deliberate the common good." The market simile forces political decisions to be made on a majority, one-person/one-vote basis—as Mansbridge declared, an adversarial model—for a competitive market arrangement submits to no other civil resolution. At the same time, the adversarial model contributes to democracy's discontents, for someone is necessarily always left holding the short straw. At times, when the short straw regularly ends up in the same hands, as has too often been the case for Hispanic citizens, the adversarial model can be justifiably criticized for not being truly representative, and alternative measures must be sought.

Unfortunately for the Benthamites, what is dubious in theory is even further discredited in practice. Just as markets have their shortcomings, the utilitarian democracy has its. Anderson cogently summarizes:

The policy science of utilitarian democracy then is persistently occupied with identifying and trying to remedy inequalities of influence, organization, and power, which turns out, in any modern state, to be a crude, unsatisfying, Sisyphean labor, leading at best to patchwork reforms that never do quite set matters straight. Yet, ironically, calculated interest is not a self-sufficient mode of political thought. Rather, it requires the presence of a constantly vigilant and intrusive elite, always trying to contribute remedies, always ardent in pursuit of an elusive ideal of a regime that does not, and cannot arise naturally, the regime of perfect contact, or perfect equality of voice and vote. . . .

This separation between the skeptical citizen and the confident policymaker—a present-day interaction of Snow's famous two-culture condition between scientists and humanists—has been reinforced by the putatively "objective" stance claimed by many policy scientists, that is, what the philosophers of science have characterized as "positivism." A Newtonian vision of the social sciences, one resulting in a position thoroughly endorsed by the durable positivist orientation (predominant in Western European culture since at least the Age of the Enlightenment), has been the touchstone of applied social sciences in the United States for much of the twentieth century. The positivist orientation, based upon the social sciences' adherence to the protocols of the natural sciences, requires its practitioners to remain above the partisan ("subjective") politics of the program and moment in order to retain their advertised objectivity. Elsewise, all pretensions to scientific (or what is thought to pass for unimpeachable evidence and) truth are seemingly abandoned. John S. Dryzek has said that positivism in policy analysis can be characterized in terms of a belief that policy interventions should be based on causal laws of society and verified by neutral empirical observation. Any practical import depends on policy-manipulable variables having a place in this causal scheme; if they did not, the result would be social science but hardly policy science. In Ronald D. Brunner's admirably terse evaluation, "For most policy analysts, positivism is science," and therefore unyielding in its findings and recommendations. (We shall return to the inherent difficulties resulting from the juxtaposition of the positivist orientation and the policy sciences later in this chapter.)

The mutually occurring and reinforcing utilitarian and positivist perspectives have been directly manifested in policy analysis methodologies, as repeatedly demonstrated by their primus inter pares reliance on economics (e.g., benefit-cost analysis, risk analysis and, by extension, public choice theory) and other forms of technical advice. The economists' presumptions (some would say arrogance) are widespread within the policy research community, especially in commonplace practice. Applied economics, often in a variation of microeconomic analysis, has been a method with which we pursue efficiency and which has the effect of limiting the vagaries of the political process. Milton Friedman's writing on positive economics strike a consonant strain: "Differences about policy among disinterested citizens derive predominantly from different predictions about the economic consequences of taking action—differences that can in principle be eliminated by the process of positive economics—rather than from fundamental differences about which men can ultimately only fight." Econometric models have achieved great currency in policy fields as disparate as national energy policy and hospital cost containment without ever having to ask the essential (and often
conveniently ignored) research question—what did the recipient citizen or the so-called “target population” want?18

Many of these approaches have long since been transferred by analysts into the fabric of government activities. The primacy of this movement was perhaps best represented by the Executive Order issued by President Ronald Reagan during the 1980s to the effect that all new federal government regulations had to be accorded a benefit-cost analysis prior to their promulgation. This approach thereby became a touchstone (some, like George W. Downs and Patrick D. Larkey, would say a millstone19) of federal policy. Even more tellingly, a majority of public administration scholars have adopted efficiency criteria as their preferred indicator of “good” government.

In an increasingly crowded and complex policy world—one in which knowledge is thought to be power and governments spend handsomely for analysis—the mantle of technical expertise, abetted by a burgeoning bureaucracy with its own (sometimes obscured) agenda, stands to subvert the participatory democratic processes as surely as expert knowledge is allowed—perhaps encouraged—to preempt lay knowledge. Christopher Lasch’s indictment of elite policy planners could hardly be more direct: “The reign of specialized expertise—the logical result of policies that equate opportunity with open access to ‘places of higher consideration’—is the antithesis of democracy. . . .”20 Max Weber—himself no minor influence on the evolution of Western bureaucracy—forecast the possible social consequences of the “expert” versus the “citizen” gap:

The “political master” finds himself in the position of a “ dilettante” who stands opposite the “expert,” facing the trained official who stands within the management of administration. This holds whether the “master” whom the bureaucracy serves is a “people” . . . or a parliament. It holds whether the master is an aristocratic, collegiate body . . . or a popularly elected president.20

This is the case even if the rationale for that knowledge is often far less than certain.22

Nowadays, Madison’s feared factions come to government regularly and well-armed with newly minted powers, easily symbolized by reams of analysis largely written by anonymous analysts who represent, in significant measures, the rulers rather than those being ruled, that is, those who effect public policy rather than those being affected. The result is that policy sciences practitioners have enthusiastically applied the utilitarian and positivist traditions to their craft, thus permitting them to celebrate the influence of the analytic few to Madison’s already-removed republic of indirect democracy. In so doing, the end result ever deepens his proposed governmental “indirectness” until one might justifiably wonder if the democratic connections were still functioning, and, if so, at what expense of representativeness, fidelity, and, ultimately, citizen confidence in the government.23 At best, the pulse seems wan, as repeated public opinion polls have revealed.

Under the utilitarian banner, “human” factors, such as politics, social conditions, and perhaps even Lasswell’s human dignity, are not commonly permitted to be included in the analytic calculation, because, as microeconomists are wont to tell us, “you can’t make interpersonal utility comparisons.” In spite of the pioneering work of humanists like Lasswell, Kaplan, and Robert K. Merton, most of the early policy research—the intellectual heritage underlying the present-day policy sciences—was carried out by technicians, usually systems analysts and operation researchers. Their positivist orientations pushed them in pursuit of a clearly defined objective function, leading to an equally clearly defined optimal solution set requiring little (if any) contribution from the intended recipients. These removed perspectives were subsequently augmented by economists—utilitarians to their epistemological core—who predicated their policy recommendations on supposedly “objective” economic relationships pursued by rational actors employing lifeless data, again requiring little knowledge of the projected clients’ particular needs or the political climate in which public policymakers, by definition, must operate. The results were all-too-predictable: policies—sadly lacking theory—based upon data—sorely lacking validity let alone simple pertinence—that were hardly the sole basis for good policy.24

The reason for this less-than-democratic situation was that under the prevailing utilitarian paradigm further seconded by positivism, elite thinking should hold societal sway as it moved rather confidently toward the “greatest good for the greatest number.” As Robert A. Dahl pointed out under the rule of comparative advantage, this delegation might make sense for a brain surgeon or a ship’s captain, but not in the case of democratic governance.25 Furthermore, this assumption of governmental power in pursuit of civic order violates the primary assumption of utilitarianism, that is, every person’s
opinion is weighted relatively the same and they will naturally seek their own preferred economic and political order.

Nor is this distance simply a benign artifact of theory. David T. Ellwood, for years one of the nation’s leading academic specialists concerning social welfare policy, was invited by the Clinton administration to become the assistant secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. He was charged with specific responsibilities for the welfare reform that had been a prominent part of Clinton’s fall campaign platform (to recall the campaign cant, “to end welfare as we know it”). By his own admission, however, Ellwood had had little actual physical contact with the poor and their depressing mien. In July 1993, a Clinton administration speech writer (with many fewer social welfare credentials than the new assistant secretary) promised during a press conference that Ellwood would soon “go out and talk to some real people” [sic].

Following a series of visits to poverty locations—a trip outside Memphis reputedly being the most disturbing—Ellwood reported back on the familiar portraits of poverty he apparently had never experienced on a firsthand basis:

We saw a woman in a horrendous rural poverty situations. Houses with no windows. Broken down ceiling. No toilet. It was just absolute, total abject poverty.

His conclusion was remarkable for what it implied—Ellwood’s “absolute, total abject lack of workday exposure to the very people and situations he was being asked to correct. In his words, the trip to Memphis “was a radicalizing experience, radicalizing because what we saw was really, really horrible.”

Although none would dispute Ellwood’s genuine concern for the plight of the poor, seemingly the halls of Harvard had blinded Ellwood to the miseries of Memphis, even though welfare reform was undoubtedly targeted toward the latter rather than his more familiar haunts. Thus, Ellwood and others in Clinton’s welfare reform camp, however sympathetic to the plight of the destitute and impoverished, have found themselves doing social welfare recipients a real disservice, both materially and psychologically. As Helen Ingram and Anne Schneider express the situation, the “rationales policymakers used to explain why policies continue to levy costs on those who have not fared so well in the capitalist economy reinforces images of dependents and deviance” upon the unfortunate.

In this instance, Ellwood and his colleagues were, in effect, acting in concert with the utilitarian tradition of the better-informed few prescribing for the less-informed but more-affected many. Sincerity was not at issue; more germane were the greatly different value structures between the groups that were often ignored or discounted. Unlike Dahl’s physician or ship captain, however, the results have left much to be desired for all concerned, since social welfare continues to be a bone in the throat of the Clinton administration and a continued humiliation for many of those covered by social welfare policies, even in the face of the recent welfare reform legislation. In this case, there was none of Dahl’s comparative advantage, and, even if there were, it would not reside in the expert’s court, because, in such cases, personal values will override “scientific” expertise.

One possible consequence of this expert-to-citizen form of the policy sciences is that its “bottom line”—its policy results—have mostly proven to be unsatisfactory, perhaps even dismal. For a variety of reasons, policy research has been methodologically rich and results poor, as its practitioners have started to express reservations toward the approach’s present-day noblesse oblige. Alice M. Rivlin, speaking as the outgoing president of the Association of Policy Analysis & Management and drawing upon her years of policy research, explained to the hard core of economics-oriented analysts present: “Economists . . . in their usual fashion, have been short on realism and long on theory and prescription.” A 1991 review of microsimulation modeling by a National Academy of Sciences commission revealed the endemic policy shortcomings of economic modeling and computer simulations—long the intellectual soul of economic modeling activities—prompting a call for a “second revolution” in policy analysis regarding the validity of the data and model reliability; as Eric Hanushek, the commission’s chair explained the commission’s predicament:

We’re talking about a second revolution in policy analysis. The first was to bring about systematic analyses about costs and benefits of policy. The second we’re calling for is to worry about the accuracy of the estimates and improve them.

Lastly, Brunner was nothing but candid in explaining the ongoing relationship between positivism and the policy sciences, one virtually dictating a continuing cooperation in spite of their lack of beneficial results:

Nevertheless, the game continues: Positive theory and method serve to justify another conclusion about the specific context, and
fit in the specific context serves to justify another theoretical generalization. . . . Positivism thus functions as a myth, providing a rhetorical justification of research standards based on "hard" methods and universal forms, and for the research that conforms to these standards. But the persuasive power of the rhetoric stems from the Newtonian ideal, not from the record of positive research in the behavioral sciences.31

Admittedly more outspoken than most, John Dryzek has asserted that the policy sciences' underlying utilitarian assumption of the "rational actor" or "economics man" model (a mode he characterizes as "instrumental rationality") renders them highly suspect in the theoretical and practical senses and inevitably inadequate to the task of recommending policies in line with the needs of the targeted clientele. Dryzek argues that the reluctance (in the case of many methodologies, the conceptual inability) of the rational actor model to consider and include political and normative implications of policy in a coherent fashion places the emphasis of merit or worth of the approach on the credibility of a rather restricted set of administrative procedures rather than on the openly observed process or final outcome. Ultimately, Dryzek continues, these analytic exercises produce more than their share of unfortunate failures for apodictic reasons, because the values that would otherwise "matter" have been largely set aside or attributed to analytic convenience or a standard assumption of programmatic efficiency; democracy, in this instance, becomes a third-order consideration. In Dryzek's brutal claim, instrumental rationality destroys the more congenial, spontaneous, egalitarian, and intrinsically meaningful aspects of human association . . . represses individuals . . . is ineffective when confronted with complex social problems . . . makes effective and appropriate policy analysis impossible . . . [and, most critically] is antidemocratic.32

James S. Fishkin refers to this failure to produce useful bilateral policy actions as due to a "disconnection with politics,"33 although there is no doubt in his mind as to who is being disconnected from whom or what. Louise G. White claims that such a bifurcation makes "it more difficult for the broader public to have an influence,"34 thereby reinforcing Greider's sour thesis; in essence, nobody is telling the people much about the troubles of governing. That disjoint is at the root of their distrust of government as well as, ultimately, its vision of democracy.35 Hank C. Jenkins-Smith sums up the problems inherent in a utilitarian pursuit of the policy sciences: "Thus, an unintended side effect of policy analysis may be to erect barriers in the way of important ends of participatory democracy."36

In summary, the Bentham-inspired, Madison-articulated models of analysis (or what latter-day scholars refer to as the "rational" school), reinforced by the trappings of positivism, have assumed the predominant brunt of the policy sciences' traditional practice and orientation revolving around institutional measures and technical expertise. The vast majority of policy analysts has therefore left the De Tocquevillian or participatory branch of American democratic theory relatively untouched as they migrate toward the utilitarian tent, seeking the convenience and prestige that defends and utilizes their technical expertise over lay opinion.36 To the point, Mark Warren concludes, it "holds, in effect, that it is desirable to depoliticize as many spheres of society as possible, rather than to democratize them,"37 as a means of continuing the status quo.

Even though much of the domestic American politics of the twentieth century has often been depicted as a series of moves toward a more direct democracy with the decentralization of authority and the outsourcing of responsibility (although, James Morone and others have contended that these have been failures, maybe even hollow charades), these movements have been largely a reflection of the utilitarian position. As America moves into the twenty-first century, utilitarianism (and its faith in microeconomics) rather than democracy has been shown to be the more decisive component in the post-Lasswellian policy sciences' methodologies and resulting policy recommendations.

**Liberal Rationalism**

An alternative to the utilitarian tradition is what Charles W. Anderson calls "liberal rationalism," which he primarily attributes to the discipline of law. Warren, a political scientist, talks of much

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31One is naturally reminded here of Paul Newman's famous performance of "Cool Hand Luke," in which the recurrent theme between Luke and the prison officials was, "What we have here is a failure to communicate." These failures, of course, are typically the fault of both sides.
the same set of ideals when he refers to “expansive democracy.” This concept principally refers to classic or “standard” democratic liberalism, in which political activists work to ensure a more equitable redistribution of justice and social resources. The heart of this political philosophy requires a sharp denial of utilitarianism, claiming that individuals are unable to think independently toward societal goals and therefore require some sort of benign assistance to articulate what behooves a reasonable person and how he or she acts as well as what the society manages to produce. Liberal rationalism reflects the very essence of big, albeit benevolent government. Its demise has long been predicted, although only recently been mandated, as politicians of every political stripe and level now state that governments can no longer be “big,” and that “bigness” itself precludes benevolence.

The rhetoric of liberal rationalism purports to argue for egalitarian principles and for the protection of individual rights. As Warren notes, “These theories argue for increased participation in, and control over collective decision making, whether by means of direct democracy in small-scale settings, or through stronger linkages between citizens and institutions that operate on broader scales.” Michael J. Sandel criticizes liberalism for placing too few bounds on its citizenry, leaving them largely rudderless and level disinfranchised. Its cumbersome, everyday practice requires that the public weal ultimately be delegated to others as a means toward resolving the often complex and inevitably protracted governmental processes. In fact, liberal rationalism demands lucid thinking and rational decision making on the part of the individual as a social characteristic, for, according to Anderson, it assumes that, under its regimen, all citizens, “whatever their culture, tradition, and place in history, will recognize this necessity for reciprocal restraints, trust, and goodwill if they are thinking clearly.” By the same token, they will also admit to a requirement for a civil government for those occasions when these presumptions of lucidity fail.

In the final balance, comments Anderson, this recognition legitimates “those of us who can think matters all the way through and recognize the need for mutual toleration, restraint, and trust have a perfect right to use coercive public power to restrain those who will not be rational.” It requires a trusting citizenship, one willing to abandon those prerogatives of governance, or at least willing to acquiesce in the loss of those rights. Conversely, it delegitimates those citizens whose thought and behavior patterns are less clear-cut and thorough, because they are seen as reacting adversely and uncivilly when groups disagree, again as posited by Ingram and Schneider in terms of the subtleties of policy design.

To implement these liberal assumptions, citizens must establish an intermediary and unrepresentative layer of governors and expertise, created to define and then to carry out the public’s welfare in the public’s stead. The ability that this group utilizes, however well-meaning and possibly even correct, again separates the governing elite from their nominal constituents, as the leaders, perform, decide for the citizen. The examples are numerous—ranging from school boards, legislators, government regulators, and virtually whatever bureaucracy or technology one wishes to name—and sometime stand in opposition to one another. For instance, the Progressive Era was best known for a series of governmental reforms designed to return direct democracy to the people (e.g., ballot initiatives, recalls, and referenda); but it also inserted large numbers of professionals into government (e.g., city managers and regulators) whose roles simultaneously undercut the movement’s democratic tendencies, apparently with the assumption that democratic citizens were unable to work their way through the underbrush of government demands in order to reach well-informed policies. How else can one explain social welfare programs that insist on the father not being present to assist in child rearing at the risk of losing benefits? The end product is procedurally analogous to the utilitarian democratic structure and processes in that, once more, it establishes government in which the many relinquish their rights to the ruling few. In this case, convenience might be the motivating factor but the endgame is the same.

As with the utilitarian philosophy, liberal rationalism can have a direct effect on public policy formulation. No better recent example of liberal rationalism exists than the Clinton administration’s strategy to devise a national health care policy, at least partially to provide coverage for the approximately thirty-seven million Americans without health insurance. Following Clinton’s November 1992 election, a committee of health care experts was convened to meet for a few months in tight secrecy under the personal direction of the president’s wife, Hillary Rodham Clinton, with Ira Magaziner being appointed to provide project management. Under the guise of preserving secrecy, even the names of the participants were closely held until a civil suit was brought, claiming that names must be made public because of Mrs. Clinton’s position, that is, the president’s wife was the study’s chair even though formally she was viewed as being
outside the government.4 Moreover, communications within the group was restricted, as staff working papers were withheld from members of the policy-making group by Magaziner’s orders. It was, to quote a participant, “one of the strangest things I’ve ever been involved in.”45

Under Mrs. Clinton’s prodding and guidance, the group labored strenuously to produce a 1,364-page proposal on how to reform the nation’s health care delivery system. Only after the plan was apparently completed did administration members pause to inquire as to its acceptability to the health care providers and to the ultimate recipients, to say nothing of the enacting Congress and of its own welter of interests and ideologies. Not entirely unexpectedly, the proposed Clinton health plan never saw the light of legislative day, dying a rather natural death in Congress, with both Republicans and Democrats disavowing the study group’s research scope and recommendations. Whether or not it would have met with greater success had there been a wider range of interests represented or been completed more or less on time is anybody’s guess, but that should not distract from the reality that under its defined structure, success was not in the cards.

Thus, the hubris of liberal rationalism (or perhaps the contending camps of the general model of liberalism if the bureaucracy or the Congress can be construed to have its own peculiar brands) toppled the acknowledged sequoia of President Clinton’s first term. The reason was not that the American health care delivery system was not troubled by rapidly rising health costs, its exceedingly technical and complex scope, nor the presence of various contending health insurance policies (i.e., third-party payers). The primary reason was that it was also important—in fact, too important to the millions of people without medical insurance (or the underinsured)—to be absconded from the American democracy system by a study group of five hundred experts, who nobody seemed to know (and whose very identity the government had consciously decided to keep hidden).

A second place where liberal rationalism falls short is that it largely ignores the key to “expansive” democracy, that is, the possibility that people find their self-images enhanced in a democratic vein if they are permitted to practice (maybe even come to understand) democracy, leading to a greater involvement in their governance. Although this concept falls into a highly normative arena relatively untouched by empirical studies, the basic assumption is that people will consider themselves better off as a function of a preference for living in a democratic society, one in which theoretically they can openly engage in the act of governing. Warren explains that “Democracy is valuable primarily because humans value both activities that allow them to grow and develop and control over the growing and developing.”

This “self-transformation” thesis that Warren proposes has a direct lineage in the American context that can be traced back to the writings of De Tocqueville, who looked upon local civic involvement and voluntary organizations as a very real form of political education toward a greater democratization. (Indeed, one can readily understand how many emigrants to the United States at least partially accepted the self-transformation argument as an essential part of their political socialization.) One can imagine De Tocqueville rather than Warren writing that “increased participation is likely to encourage substantive changes in interest in the direction of commonality, transforming conflict in the direction of consensus.”46 Or the pragmatist philosopher John Dewey, avowing that “the best cure for democracy is more democracy” in direct contrast to the institutional theories championed by Madison’s philosophical descendants or liberalism’s preemptive model of governance.4

Moreover, the democratic myth perpetrated by liberal rationalism disowns the citizen from the intrinsic values derived from democracy itself. This is the situation many Americans currently find themselves in, for they no longer appear to believe that their opinions matter in a wide range of subjects, from job security to government programs to the siting of professional sports franchises. And the aura of expertise goes out of its way to emphasize that, in fact, they do not matter because the issues of government do appear to be complex and technically daunting. There would appear to be a direct trade-off between the poles of technical or economic complexity and the democratic ethos, although a number of policy scholars like Richard Sclove and John Bridger Robinson have steadfastly denied

4The courts found that Mrs. Clinton held no formal government office, as the plaintiffs contended; however, her status as the president’s wife—the First Lady—made her de facto government employee, hence allowing the courts to preserve the secrecy of the panel.

4/ For those enticed with the “who said it first” game, we should admit that Governor Al Smith of New York was quoted as saying in 1933 that “All the ills of democracy can be cured by more democracy.” Whether he had previously read Dewey’s Public and Its Problems (1927) is uncertain.
such a linkage. Henry Kariel captures the essence of what is at stake:

These personages may well know what is best for others. But the better they know, that is, the more objective and helpful they are, the more they jeopardize popular participation. . . . Those whose civic center—or library, museum or city hall—it is must help to create it, even if the policy process thereby becomes untidy and the final result more cluttered and less manageable than professional planners would hope. Economic losses may be political gains.

There are a few examples in which these obstacles are being challenged, where the stakes might be perceived by citizens to be particularly high—environmental politics is one such example of the primacy of *homo civicus* over *homo economicus*—or fundamentally normative in their arguments—of course legalized abortion or, by similar logic but at the other end of life, the death penalty is the great stickler here—but these are not the norm. Rather, it would seem that liberal rationalism is permitted to establish the broad boundaries of governance and then to operate with relative impunity within them. Once again, citizens ultimately find themselves disenfranchised from the democratic processes.

A Comparison

Thus, while their respective rationales might be different, the utilitarian and liberal rationalism schools both are seen from the democratic perspective as distancing the people from their government. They prescribe a dense, often obscure layer of bureaucracy and expertise well above—supposedly well beyond the ken of—direct citizen participation. These phenomena are what the present argument would advance as a direct political continuation of the Madison (as opposed to the De Tocqueville) vision of American democracy. It is not to claim that one approach or the other is an "inferior" or "wrong" brand of democracy (whatever those appellations might portend). Rather, nothing more profound is implied by that evaluation than to observe that the two visions are fundamentally different—indeed, as different as Madison and De Tocqueville themselves. Therefore, the operating rules suitable for carrying out the first one might not be suitable for the other.

More important for the American policy sciences in the context of a democratic setting is that the opportunities for policy recommenda-

dations and implementation provided by the De Tocquevillean stream have not been realistically tested or really even tried except by fringe political groups, and then not in the conventional policy analytic mode. Indeed, it is implausible to expect that they can be assessed by a policy community that adheres closely to either the utilitarian or the liberal rational model. This is a strange disciplinary boycott because other political functions are increasingly being judged on their allegiance to decentralization, a strategy inviting widespread participation, mostly by organizations but certainly not precluding individual participation.

John Dryzek has proposed that the elite orientation of the policy sciences has revealed its tendencies toward the "policy sciences of tyranny." "By tyranny," Dryzek explained, "I do not mean the authoritarian dystopia feared by Laswell, but any elite-controlled policy process that overrules the desires and aspirations of ordinary citizens." Hank C. Jenkins-Smith has reviewed much of the literature that worries over the possibility that the policy sciences of democracy might be literally transformed into the policy sciences of tyranny and comes to the conclusion that while the threat might be latent, there are "data [that] analysts are far from achieving the status of all-powerful technicians and that the likelihood of obtaining that status appears slim."

However reassuring Jenkins-Smith's reasoning might be to democratic thinking, the situation is still troubling. He argues that the main reason for the policy analysts' lack of effect within governmental circles is not their deafness to the vox populi but the fact that policy decision-makers do not yet have sufficient confidence in the craft of the policy scientists to provide highly credible answers, that is, guidance. This is not to deny the possibility that the potential toward tyranny is absent—Laswell himself coined the phrase the policy sciences of tyranny in 1949, Dryzek revisited it forty years later, and Jenkins-Smith himself was certainly cognizant of the threat—only that the policy sciences have not presented themselves in such a despotic form at least partially because they are not taken as ironclad gospel by policymakers. This is hardly a blameless instance for the policy scientist desirous of policy credibility, let alone deserving the democratic ascription. Still, one must legitimately wonder about the body politic's democratic condition when critical regulations are drawn up and executed by analysts and administrators who are, simultaneously, several layers removed from elected representatives and at least that many steps removed from the effected population (to say nothing of regulators who are more closely
associated with the very parties they are supposed to be regulating rather than citizens.

This condition is particularly nettlesome as new technologies and methodologies seemingly make it impossible for the layperson to become involved in policy decisions, and, likewise, for policy-makers to understand what is at stake. The analysis and policy-making underlying the search for a national energy policy during the 1970s illustrates both the isolation and complexity components of the contemporary policy sciences. Policy analysts are prone to defend their isolated status as designed to insulate their analysis from vested political influences but this is an empty excuse; too many analysts have already admitted in numerous ways that their activities are at heart and by necessity intrinsically political in nature. Failing to connect with the political world would render their activities as little more than academic exercises.

However, these obstacles to a lay involvement in policy research are not dictated nor enforced by immutable laws of physics; they are man-made rules and like anything else man-made, can be circumscribed by other persons. For instance, Paul Bracken and Martin Shubik have carefully studied one of the most arcane, complex, and lethal technologies one can imagine — nuclear warfare. For years, it was “accepted wisdom” within the Pentagon and its “in-house” civilian strategists that nuclear strategy was too difficult to share with the country, that the “wizards of Armageddon” were members of a sacred priesthood who broached no outsiders to their decision-making councils. But Bracken and Shubik made the strong normative argument that citizens should — indeed, ought to be for there can be no alternative but to — be involved in the nuclear danse macabre. Nuclear strategy was (and still is) a value-laden policy of the first magnitude, one that consumed large amounts of national resources (estimated at close to three trillion dollars) and possibly portended the destruction of civilization; many went so far as to call it immoral. Regardless, to have anything less than full citizen participation would have itself been immoral. The public demonstrations of the early 1980s against nuclear weapons was a major step toward that realization, an extraordinary grass-roots, nationwide movement to stop the nuclear arms race,” which was later legitimized by the nuclear weapons treaties negotiated in their wake.

In summary, with a few important exceptions, the quotidian policy sciences have become an elite, sequestered activity, one whose services to democracy seemingly come as an afterthought to their primary fealty to their governmental agencies. Although the policy sciences are usually a function of a utilitarian approach, we have seen that a liberal rational defense for this behavior is also applicable. Their traditional positivist methodologies as well as their putative removal from politics have increasingly distanced the policy analyst from the policy recipient for the programs under discussion, as they self-consciously reclude themselves from the hurly-burly but imperative normative aspects of politics.

This democratic dilemma is not a Manichean condition; we need not be faced with a policy sciences of tyranny to admit that we are faced with a policy sciences that is less-than-democratic in the direct representation, participative sense of the word. If we are in fact dealing with the policy sciences of democracy, then it is a strained democracy, one at its most indirect and removed, in which unelected analysts and administrators are being entrusted (often by other unelected officials) to represent popular interests and necessities. Madisonian democracy faithfully filtered through Weberian bureaucracy, if you will, but, in any case, a system far short of its Lasswellian heritage and democratic ideals. Thus, the policy sciences directly lend themselves to the general popular disappointment with government, its activities, and, indirectly, democracy itself.

The policy sciences have typically chosen not to avail themselves of the opportunities occasioned by the participatory, De Tocquevillean philosophy of governance. Recent amendments to the tradition policy sciences paradigm by an expanded community of policy scientists and their new interpretations have provided alternative possibilities to overcome many of the traditional impediments to a more democratic policy sciences and particularly to a more participatory model. Therefore, let us now turn to an examination of the underlying assumptions that contribute to an alternative set of policy paradigms.

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6 Or, if Citro and Hanushek’s National Academy study on micromobilization is to be believed, many experts as well.

8 One needs to add that these demonstrations were bitterly opposed by then-president Reagan.