POLICY PROCESS RESEARCH FOR DEMOCRACY:
A COMMENTARY ON LASSEWELL’S VISION

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Paper accepted for publication in the
International Journal of Policy Studies
Volume 1, Number 2, December 2010
ABSTRACT

An essential and yet unfulfilled component of Harold Lasswell’s vision of policy sciences was “to improve the practice of democracy.” This paper offers commentary of current strategies for achieving this goal in the context of the policy process research community. The foundation of our argument is that some strategies for seemingly improving democracy have been oversubscribed: (1) Relying on policy implications; (2) Relying on normative theories; and (3) Relying on Political Advocacy. And other strategies have been undersubscribed: (1) Teaching; (2) Shaping the academic community; and (3) Participatory policy process research. We conclude that different objectives of policy process compared to policy analysis research lend themselves to different strategies for improving democracy. We recommend that the policy process researchers should broaden their strategies for achieving Lasswell’s vision of improving democracy. Ultimately the extent that policy process research impacts democracy is an empirical question that deserves the attention on our research agendas.
INTRODUCTION

Our objective is to provide critical commentary on the current state of policy process research as part of the policy sciences and, specifically, its democratic mission as was most clearly articulated by Harold D. Lasswell (1951; also 1948/2009). Lasswell’s abiding theme throughout much of his policy-oriented literature emphasized the “policy sciences of democracy, an orientation seemingly neglected in much of the contemporary policy process material (Lasswell, 1951). We discuss what we perceive as both oversubscribed as well as undersubscribed strategies used by policy process researchers to link their research results with democratic outcomes.

The context of our arguments relates to policy process research, which we define as the systematic study of the interactions among people in the development of public policy over time. More concretely, policy process research is often depicted in the context of the policy cycle. The policy cycle refers to the key stages of policymaking: the ways in which people struggle to define issues as problems worthy of attention on government agendas; how people analyze problems and devise and select among policy alternatives; how people implement policy; and how people evaluate and sometimes terminate policy. Also called the stages heuristic, the policy cycle began in the original work by Harold D. Lasswell (1948/2009; 1956) and later refined by others, notably Brewer (1974), Brewer and deLeon (1983), May and Wildvasky (1978), and deLeon (1988). Among the leading textbooks in public policy, James Anderson (1997), William Dunn (1994), Howlett and Ramesh (1995), and Kraft and Furlong (2007) portray policy process research by the policy cycle. Even Paul Sabatier – perhaps the leading critic of the policy cycle – equates policy process research with the policy cycle when introducing Theories of the Policy Process: “In the process of public policymaking, problems are conceptualized and brought to the government for solution; governmental institutions formulate alternatives and select policy solutions; and those solutions get implemented, evaluated, and revised” (Sabatier, 2007, 3).

The policy cycle, however, too narrowly depicts the scope of policy process research. A cursory look at the theoretical and practical applications of policy process research shows that it encompasses, at a minimum, the study of political behavior among individuals, groups, and coalitions; minor and major policy change; the role of experts and citizens as well as the different uses of information and other resources; collective action problems as related to public policy issues; social constructions and causal stories; power and inequalities, and policy designs. Depictions of policy process research that transcend the policy cycle can be found in the theories, frameworks, and models in Sabatier’s edited volumes (1999, 2007) and in the introductory primers offered by Parsons (1995), Birkland (2001), and Smith and Larimer (2009). More to the point is that our presentation is not a debate into the nuances among the meanings and uses of the policy cycle versus policy process research versus policy sciences research. Rather our intent is to provide a commentary on current strategies among policy process researchers to improve democracy.
Lasswell, of course, famously argued for policy research (in this case, the policy sciences) as a function of “knowledge in” and “knowledge of” the policy process (Lasswell, 1971). As we just discussed, we intentionally focus on the stream of research evolving in part from Lasswell’s “knowledge of” description. We intentionally exclude the former; i.e., the traditional practice found in policy analysis and evaluation literature (e.g., the work associated with Weimer and Vining [2005] or Stokey and Zeckhauser [1979]). As summarized in Table 1, policy analysis research in contrast to policy process research is usually client-oriented, places low emphasis on theory, writes primarily to practitioner as an audience, and emphasizes policy recommendations and implications. Such research requires different sorts of arguments than those presented herein. Our arguments also relate more to the constant stream of manuscripts appearing in peer-reviewed journals primarily with academic audiences and less to government and non-government reports and documents or to practitioner-oriented journals that may or may not be subject to peer review.

-Insert Table 1-

Among the pioneers of policy process research, Lasswell’s contribution joins Herbert Simon’s (1985) bounded rationality, Lindblom’s incrementalism, and Easton’s (1956) systems model (for discussion of the early pioneers, see Parsons, 1995). While the underlying basis of our argument builds from these pioneers of policy process research, our argument uses more contemporary examples, such as Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram’s Social Construction Framework (1997; 2007 with deLeon) and Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones’ Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (1993; 2005).

As this commentary is founded more upon casual rather than systematic observations, we acknowledge that our argument merely reflects our observations of current practice among policy process (writ large) research. Rather than being empirically derived, we pose our observations more as “thought problems.” As such, they are open to empirical inquiry – even refutation. Indeed, one of our concluding points is that a component of future policy research agenda should address the utilization of existing strategies as well as their effectiveness in terms of linking policy process research to various dimensions of democratic outputs and outcomes.

Lastly, we wish to avoid the “heroic” characterization of Lasswell suggested by Farr, Hacker, and Kazee (2006, 2008); Brunner (2008) has already spoken clearly against their argument. Rather, we do subscribe to Farr et al. (2006) as a touchstone when they propose that “Lasswell’s ideal of the policy scientist of democracy…continues to speak to questions that political scientists should not stop asking. What is the role of the political scientist in a democratic society?…Are there democratic values that political science should serve and, if so, what are they?” (2006, 585) Most pointedly, Farr and his colleagues (586) posit: “Can we have a science of politics and policy dedicated to democracy in a troubled world?” That is, specifically, we wish to build our analysis on Lasswell’s avowal that “the policy sciences of democracy” were “directed towards knowledge to improve the practice of democracy” (1951,
15). We now turn to our main theme: given that conditions have surely changed in the last half century, how can the contemporary policy sciences community best serve its democratic orientations?

THREE OVERSUBSCRIBED STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING DEMOCRACY

First: Relying on Policy Implications

Let us pose a “typical” scenario: An analyst has just presented a discussion of her recently concluded research, perhaps at an academic conference or at a college class seminar. Invariably a member of the audience will ask: “What are the policy implications of your research?” as if answering that question somehow legitimates the democratic credentials of the analysis. We propose that such an ascription is ill conceived, that the linkage between results and “improving democracy” are far too ambiguous to be simply assumed, and that, even if the analyst were to give a perfect list of plausible policy implications, rarely will the right practitioner be present in the audience to heed such advice. Thus, the first oversubscribed strategy for improving democracy and democratic governance relates to this “so what” question.

The purpose of the “so what” prompt is somehow to link the reported results from a given study to policy implications for the practitioner. It often indicates that the problem has been successfully analyzed but also resolved (assuming, of course, that the political decision maker takes the analyst’s advice). The “so what” question and the policy implications section in a given paper or presentation are based partly on Lasswell’s vision of contextual and problem-oriented policy research.

However, there are at least two arguments that threaten the utility of the “policy implications” section of an article or in a typical academic presentation. First, are the policy implications reaching the practitioner audience in a direct manner? Take peer reviewed outlets; while most of the mainstream political science journals – the American Political Science Review and even the Policy Studies Journal – are rarely subscribed by practitioners, even the Policy Sciences (Editor Toddi Steelman indicates an 80-20 split between policy analysts and practitioners) and Public Administration Review (Editor Richard Stillman’s analogous estimate is 50-50) attract just as much, if not more, academics than practitioners as subscribers. These are just estimations; however, in truth we do not know the extent that such policy cross-over journals are actually subscribed and, even more importantly, read by practitioners. Nevertheless, from our limited experience as co-editors of the Policy Studies Journal (and, indeed, in deLeon’s case, former editor of Policy Sciences), we suspect that the principal subscribers from the perspective of the actual publishers are libraries, far beyond the workaday reach of the practitioner community. We posit that academic journals subject to peer-review attract first academics and second practitioners as their principal subscribers and readers. In short, the likely audience (mostly academics) of peer-reviewed journals is not in a position to propose, let alone implement
a new policy. If this phenomenon seems true, then our best policy recommendations are falling on deaf ears.

For the second, let us relax that condition and assume that academic articles are read by large and influential numbers of practitioners or that our academic conference are heavily attended by practitioners. Given the limitations of any given study with regards to its own validity as well as extent of generalizability, we need to ask seriously: should practitioners actually follow the policy implications outlined by the author in the conclusion? Three sub-points are worth making: (1) The research utilization literature has a difficult time linking any complex policy decision back to a given, specific research study (Caplan et al., 1975; Weiss, 1980). Moreover, subsequent evaluation studies rarely focus on the recommendations of a solitary study, let alone if any evidence that policy implications are adhered to or followed. What is likely happening is that the study results settle like sedimentation through long-term cognitive updating and “learning”, as articulated years ago by Carol Weiss and her idea of “policy creep” (Weiss, 1980). The problem is that we do not know if practitioners are reading the policy implications or some other part of the study. (2) If the practitioner community were to read the de rigors section on research limitations, would it be wise (let alone politic) for them to follow those recommendations given the self-ascribed limitations of any study. Furthermore, as publishing researchers, are we confident enough with our results to provide strong recommendations to a practitioner in a different setting? And (3), if we believe with Lasswell (1956) (also Brewer and deLeon [1983]) that the “Selection” stage reflects that collection of a range of policy advice supplemented by the decision maker’s own set of priorities, then the “so what” recommendations would seem to be marginal at best and, as such, be largely disregarded by decisionmakers, unless, for reasons mostly outside the analyst’s control, the conclusions jibed closely with the decisionmaker’s a priori preferences.

Assuming that all policy scholars usually must respond to the “so what” question sometime in their careers, to be provocative, responsible, or even just plain honest, we need ask: what is a bigger threat to democracy – the academic who actually believes that practitioners really reads and heeds their recommended policy implications or the practitioner who actually reads and heeds the advice offered in the policy implications section. We propose that the biggest gain for democracy is likely through the long-term learning among practitioners from a series of study results (and possibly a meta-study to point out longitudinal trends), although we do not know for sure if they are learning from the policy implications or from some other part of the study or via some other policy research. In any case, one needs to re-examine the logic that equates the “so what” question as our best strategy for linking academia to democratic outcomes.

**Second: Relying on Normative Theories**

Our second over-subscribed strategy for improving the democratic orientation to policy research is the over-reliance on normative theories. Policy process theories are typically divided into those with normative basis, e.g., Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram’s social construction
framework (1997; 2007 with deLeon) and those lacking a stated normative basis, e.g., Frank Baumgartner and Brian Jones’ Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (1993; 2005).

Such a division reveals different strategic decisions by researchers in making their research useful to possibly different audiences. Indeed, this division is artificially created and needlessly divides the policy process research community into two camps: those who claim to be doing science for democracy’s sake and those who claim to be doing science for science’s sake.

Whereas many policy analysts and policy process scholars explicitly limit themselves to a scientific role in which the goal is testing propositions and refining theory, Schneider and Ingram, as well as many others who have used their policy design framework, put the “so what” question front and center. They assert that it is a worthy goal to develop knowledge for its own sake, but developing the kind of knowledge that serves human society, justice, and quality of life is an even more worthy pursuit (Schneider and Sydney, 2009, 111-12).

Neither side, of course, is completely right nor completely clear in how their research relates back to democracy. Consider these two hypothetical questions: Do Schneider and Ingram make a greater contribution to democracy than Baumgartner and Jones because they identify how inequalities persist in “degenerative” political systems? Or, does Baumgartner and Jones’ research make an equal contribution to democracy because they have re-shaped our views of policy change as consisting not just of incremental adjustments but also of periodic “punctuations,” regardless of the extant system of governance?

Identifying enduring problems in democracy – such as inequalities via Schneider and Ingram’s social construction framework – certainly plays a role in shaping how citizens develop their problem perceptions as well as their strategies for influencing policy processes. At the same time, so-called “non-normative” (broadly speaking, empirical) theories – such as Baumgartner and Jones’ punctuated equilibrium theory – provide insight into issues related to policy change and political behavior also play a role in shaping how citizens develop their problem perceptions as well as their strategies for influencing policy processes.

One could argue that the social construction framework (S.C.F.) does a better job than the punctuated equilibrium theory (P.E.T.) in terms of identifying societal problems. Take an admittedly extreme example: both analytical approaches could be used to analyze policy processes in authoritative regimes, such as Iran and North Korea. Both approaches would be illuminating but in different ways. The S.C.F. is designed to accentuate power inequalities and excessive distribution of burdens to negatively social constructed target populations, thereby declaring North Korea’s totalitarian state one of degenerative politics. The P.E.T. would underscore the power of a policy monopoly to suppress an opposition by creating the institutional friction stifling the flow of information and delaying adaptation and punctuations in
the political system. In contrast to the social construction framework, the P.E.T. would be ambivalent about making explicit evaluations of the normative implications of the presence of policy monopolies and extreme institutional friction. At issue, then, would be the extrapolated visions of either set of theorists in linking governmental systems to normative frameworks; while P.E.T. might not adhere to Lasswellian democratic underpinnings, it surely can affect the way we view government. While both indicate governmental shortcomings, S.C.F. would emphasize normative failures while P.E.T. deals more with governmental inefficiencies.

Our point is simple but not necessarily obvious: it is quite possible for both normative and non-normative policy process theories to improve the democratic policy processes in a society. From our hypothetical example, both approaches would provide insight into the policy processes of authoritative regimes. Such information could alter problem definitions, mobilize citizens, shape agendas, and possibly lead policy change. The S.C.F., however, would take an additional step by declaring that degenerative politics are undesirable. The P.E.T. would not – indeed, could not – make such a declaration. Such normative declarations are important because they provide the basis for guiding policy implications and political strategies – a point that cannot be understated. Nevertheless, another important ingredient for guiding policy implications and political strategy is a realistic understanding of policy processes – a point attainable by both normative and non-normative theories.

Third: Relying on Political Advocacy

A third oversubscribed approach for improving democracy is through direct political advocacy by policy process researchers. Such an approach has possibly been a part of the social sciences since the beginning of the discipline (Hale, 2008) and one of the possible roles played by academics in the policy process, as interpreted into Jenkins-Smith’s “issue advocate” (1990) and repeated more recently by Pielke (2005).

Political advocacy, especially by trained and practiced scholars, is important for democracy. Toward a better democracy, it is probably easy to imagine many positive roles that policy process researchers play as policy advocates. A policy process researcher who is steeped in the social construction framework could possibly raise awareness among the public or elected sovereigns about undue burdens placed on negatively constructed target populations. Or policy process researcher familiar with the punctuated equilibrium theory might counsel an advocacy group to develop protests that shock the political system, mobilize bystanders, attract the attention of macro-political actors, and thereby increasing the chances for policy change.

However - towards greater threats to democracy - it is also possible that political advocacy by policy process researchers could make problems worse than better. In some policy processes, “scientific” information can exacerbate political conflicts as scientific and technical information can be used as political salvo to extend debates over years and decades (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993; Pielke, 2005). Examples from salient public policy debates are plenty.
Years ago, Albert Wohlstetter argued in the pages of ORSA/TIMS that anti-missile experts fundamentally skewed their analysis in the guise of scientific advocacy; today, health policy experts are similarly engaged in confounding scientific advocacy with values (i.e., public vs. private care) differences; similar disputes are noted in research relying on human stem cells and global warming (Mooney, 2005).

Alternately, one could look to the insightful logic from the advocacy coalition framework about the detrimental use of science in policy (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993): First, during intense political conflicts, actors will mobilize into coalitions sympathetic to their policy goals; Second, coalitions will selectively choose and interpret scientific and technical information to bolster their beliefs while at the same time ignore and discount information incongruent to their beliefs; And, third, the result is a “dialogue of the deaf” among opponents, constraints on learning among opponents, and long-prolonged political conflicts. In general, the political use of scientific and technical information can shadow the real source of political gridlock – underlying differences in values and interests. Similar arguments can be found in Schneider and Ingram’s (1997) arguments about the social construction of knowledge or even Fischer’s (2000) arguments about the role of experts in society.

The central point is that political advocacy is certainly a path that policy process researchers have taken and can take to improve democracy but it can comport as many risks as benefits, surely as Lasswell realized through his knowledge of the totalitarian regimes (see his, with Daniel Lerner, World Revolutionary Elites, 1960).

UNDERSUBSCRIBED STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING DEMOCRACY

First: Democracy through Pedagogy

Among the policy process scholars, Helen Ingram and Anne Schneider have probably been two of the leaders and most successful academics in terms of providing the research community a normative policy process theory with possible implications. How have they impacted democracy? For surely if they have not, then few have.

Even though Schneider and Ingram’s social construction framework is still being developed, they have introduced issues of social constructions and the attendant distributions of benefits and burdens not articulated in other policy process theories. As such, they have attracted the attention of researchers worldwide. Indeed, as of the fall of 2009, a review of Google Scholar listed 377 citations for Schneider and Ingram (1997), 410 for Schneider and Ingram (1993), and 193 for Schneider and Ingram (1990). Such a record epitomizes the distinguished impact of two contemporary policy process researchers in terms of scholarly research (as noted above, we have little direct evidence of how a social construction framework has clearly affect a policy prescription) as well as serving as real life role models for many graduate students in terms of a life time of distinguished scholarship.
Still, even given their distinguished careers, we argue that one of the less recognized and beneficial impacts from Schneider and Ingram’s work have been through their teaching. For the sake of argument, let us assume that Schneider and Ingram have been cited 1000 times by the research community. Let us also ignore the possibly substantive impacts (e.g., actual reductions in poverty largely driven by their work). Let us presume now as to how Ingram and Schneider have stressed democratic processes through their teaching (at the University of Arizona and the University of California Irvine for Prof. Ingram, and Oklahoma State and Arizona State for Prof. Schneider). Assume both scholars taught 60 future student practitioners a year about their social construction framework for 20 years and thereby may have reached 1200 practitioners total. These 1200 students were exposed to the normative underpinnings of the social construction framework, including social constructions, power, degenerative policy cycles, and distributions of benefits and burdens.

We recognize that the actual use of the social construction framework by the hypothetical 1,200 practitioners taught by them is unknown. We also recognize that the impact on democracy from the 1000 citations of the social construction framework is unknown. Our argument: it is possible that Schneider and Ingram – two of the most prolific policy process researchers in the last couple of decades – to have had just as big of an effect on democracy in the body politic and its democratic processes through their teaching as through their research.

Second: Shaping the Values of the Academic Community

There are democratic “coat tails” that go beyond the individual student and cover the very academic process itself. The contribution towards the democratic orientation fostered by Schneider and Ingram, inter alia, is more than just previously discussed for they both have shaped how the academic community conducts their research (evidence being the nearly 100 applications of the S.C.F.) and how they teach.

Their impact on democracy is multiplied by shaping how the academic community views and thereby teaches policy processes. One of the limitations of the current approach to policy sciences is that the relation between academia and practitioners is primarily through publications and policy implications. Given that the primary audience for most peer-reviewed journals is academics and given sizeable percent of an academic job is through teaching, one of the biggest impacts on democracy from Schneider and Ingram’s social construction framework has been indirect by influencing pedagogy in the academic community.

The first is obvious: there have been nearly 100 applications of the social construction framework, a generous estimate based on their enumeration provided in Ingram, Schneider, and deLeon (2007). That suggests what the scholastic community “knows” and writes with this knowledge in mind: that social construction is one of the principal approaches to studying public policy. The second is less obvious: assume now that 100 other universities use their framework as required reading in their policy process or public policy class. Assume too that each of the
100 universities teaches 60 students for 20 years, equaling 120,000 practitioners. This number far exceeds any of the citations by Schneider and Ingram and the application of their framework.

These 120,000 practitioners are now possibly thinking with regards to how power and constructions shape (in Schneider and Ingram’s typologies) dependent or even deviant populations and they might develop strategies to counter such degenerative policy making processes. That is, inculcating a normative component to a growing generation of policymakers or administrators could have demonstrable effects on the democratic ethos, though we, of course, are not in a position to calibrate these effects. Furthermore, the 100 applications likely list policy implications, assume for the moment that these implications are read by practitioners. If part of the strategy for improving democracy is just having an opportunity to make a difference, we argue that the impact of policy process pedagogy and research on the academic community cannot be ignored. (And, of course, this “guessimate” does not include other policy process scholars such as Baumgartner and Jones (1993) or demonstrably democratic theorists, such as Dahl [1990], Fishkin [2009], Dryzek [1990], and many members of the policy sciences community, nor is it meant to overlook the contributions of the public administration scholars, such as Paul Appleby [1945]).

**Third: Participatory Policy Process Research**

We take as a starting point deLeon’s (1997) three-fold thesis advanced in *Democracy and the Policy Sciences*; i.e., to many observers, much of policy analysis (of the likes of Weimer and Vining, 2005) has been “captured” by a few powerful policy elites, its participatory orientations have withered, and, (at least partially) as a result, the public in general views policy research in general as a simple extension of disreputable politics; in turn, the voting public feels equally disenfranchised from their democratic heritage, all of which directly undermines the democratic orientation of the policy sciences (Grieder, 1992; Lasch, 1995).

In response, deLeon (1997) recommended participatory policy analysis with three founding principles: (1) that democracy requires that affected citizens be involved in advising government in their decisions; (2) that participation among affected citizens would foster socialization among people from both government and nongovernment; (3) that contextual knowledge from the affected citizens would compliment other forms of knowledge, particular from technical and scientific paradigms. DeLeon’s main argument (1997) is that participatory policy analysis would serve to advise government in making decisions, revitalize social capital and reduce distrust in government, and, in the end, strengthen democracy. The timing of deLeon’s (1997) arguments embody a shift in the mood during the mid-1990s away from exclusionary approaches (e.g., public hearings) to more cooperative approaches (e.g., citizen councils) with regards to information generation and government advising (Gastil, 2000; Roberts, 2008). Similar recommendations, e.g., can be found with the National Research Council’s (Stein and Feinberg, 1996) analytic-deliberative approach to risk assessment.
Compared to policy analysis, perhaps one of the greatest disadvantages of policy process research is that it does not lend itself easily to deLeon’s participatory approach. For the sake of argument—and taken at the extremes—the problem can be thought of as reflecting the enduring debate between applied and basic research in the social sciences (Dryzek, 1995; Dryzek, 2000; Habermas, 1996). The objectives of policy analysis, e.g., are more akin to applied-science because of its use of clients and its objective of making context-specific policy recommendations. Hence, policy analysis research tends to incorporate both knowledgeable and involved citizens with technical and scientific experts. The objectives of policy process research is more akin to basic-science; thus, researchers often exclude citizens because the objectives are to describe and explain theoretical aspects of the policy process, often with the goal of generalizations.

While the objectives of policy process research will remain the same, the methodological approach to policy process research can change. The type of participatory policy process research that we recommend parallels Van de Ven’s “basic informed research” where the researcher maintains control in conducting the study but is informed by advice of selected stakeholders (2007, 272). As a complementary alternative to deLeon’s (1997) participatory approach to policy analysis, basic informed research is appropriate when researchers’ objectives are focused more on describing and explaining than on building theory and generalizations. In informed basic research, the researcher takes a detached, outsider role and relies on stakeholders for advice to help guide the research while at the same time maintaining ultimate control.

For example, Paul Sabatier— but one scholar who tries to maintains an outsider/detached position to his research subjects while conducting research guided by the advocacy coalition framework—regularly employs stakeholder advisory committees to guide him and his research team in the development of research designs, the crafting of surveys, and in the interpretation and dissemination of results (Sabatier et al., 2003). The stakeholder advisory committees include a representative balance of the major actors involved (and sometimes not involved) in the policy issue under study. The committee may meet at the beginning and end of a research project and its members may be consulted throughout a research project. The stakeholder advisory committee provides local and contextual knowledge in designing the research and in interpreting the results. The main point is that this style of research involves context-specific information in the beginning to inform the study, rigorous scientific methods in data collection and analysis in the middle, and context-specific feedback at the end. This overall approach has been described by Sabatier as “context-science-context.”

To some extent, these stakeholder advisory committees serve the same purposes as deLeon’s participatory policy analysis by bridging local knowledge and scientific knowledge and involving some affected citizens into the research design. The tangible benefits from participating in a stakeholder advisory committee are their immediate exposure to the raw data and research results. Like participatory policy analysis, among the intangible benefits of basic informed research are the development of relationships between academics and stakeholders in
the co-production of knowledge. We also tend to agree with how Van de Ven describes his experience in conducting informed basic research:

Practitioners tend to view me and my colleagues as friendly outsiders who facilitate a critical understanding of their situation. Reflective practitioners want to make sense of and learn from their experience (Schön, 1987). They seek opportunities to talk and reflect on their experiences with trusted outside research who they view as safe, impartial listeners and sounding boards for their ideas…Practitioners tend to appreciate the special expertise of academic researchers in bringing ideas from relevant theories and cases to the setting being studied, approach ideas from the outside, reflecting ideas back to organizational participants, and providing opportunities for critical analysis and discussion. (2007, 272-3)

To be clear, we are not prescribing techniques of informed basic research to all policy scientists or public policy process theorists. After all, our depiction of the policy process research as applied versus basic research overly simplifies the diversity of scholarship and excludes even more engaged scholarship mentioned by Van de Ven (2007) or Yanow (1991). Our points are, first, we should recognize the pluralistic nature of the policy sciences and, second, different objectives of policy process versus policy analysis research lend themselves to differing strategies for improving democracy. Both participatory policy analysis and participatory policy process research – and especially the rich diversity of approaches within each – are complementary and have the potential to improve democracy and therefore should be accepted among the strategies practiced by the both of the policy research communities as one means to reach Lasswell’s democratic vision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We first argue strongly that policy scholars (e.g., policy scientists and policy process researchers) should broaden their arsenal of strategies for improving democracy. Engagement, normative theories, and “so what” policy implications are probably necessary but surely not sufficient. They should engage in participatory policy process research, emphasize teaching, and recognize that basically the principal audience of their research is other academics and through changing their minds they can indirectly impact democracy.

We began with a distinction between policy analysis and policy process research. We conclude with Table 2 that recaps the relative strengths of policy analysis research and policy process research by the strategies. From Table 2, we posit that the over-subscribed strategies are generally more effective in policy analysis research than policy process research and perhaps this explains the inattention to the undersubscribed strategies, which are more effective in policy process research. Table 2 underscores one of our main arguments: different objectives of policy process versus policy analysis research lend themselves to differing strategies for improving
democracy. Additionally, Table 2 does not provide a complete problem definition of the challenges facing policy scientists in improving democracy for there are other strategies both over and under subscribed. Instead, the purpose is to encourage discussion of the different ways in which a policy process scholar can improve democracy.

-Insert Table 2-

The commentary herein has been more polemic than based on rigorously defined substance and this brings us to the final point. Our arguments reflect raw observations that require the concerted attention of research agendas of policy scientists. If they are serious about achieving Lasswell’s visions of improving “the policy sciences of democracy” (as opposed to Dryzek’s ascribed “policy sciences of tyranny”; Dryzek, 1989, 89), then attention must be given to the best strategies for achieving this goal. Indeed, one of the points of agreements between Brunner (2008) and Farr et al. (2006) was that “the policy scientist was to be a practitioner of a kind of science that took the lawyer’s or doctor’s practice as its model…” (Farr et al., 2006, 582). This multitiered approach can only be achieved through Lasswellian catholicity; i.e., it must be realized through mixed method and context oriented. Ultimately, we argue that this is a very real problem needing the attention of both the policy sciences and policy processes communities to ensure the bedrock position of democracy in government and governance.
REFERENCES


Table 1. Properties of Policy Process and Policy Analysis Research

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<tr>
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<th>Policy Process Research</th>
<th>Policy Analysis Research</th>
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<td>“Knowledge of” policy processes</td>
<td>“Knowledge in” policy processes</td>
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<td>2. Client</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>3. Emphasis on theory</td>
<td>High Priority</td>
<td>Low Priority</td>
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<td>4. Audience</td>
<td>Primarily Academics</td>
<td>Primarily Practitioners</td>
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<td>Academic Journals</td>
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<td>7. Emphasis of Scholarship</td>
<td>Problem Definition, Explanatory Analysis</td>
<td>Policy Recommendations and Implications</td>
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Table 2. Postulated Effectiveness of Strategies for Improving Democracy in Policy Process and Policy Analysis Research

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<td>Strategies</td>
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<td>1. Relying on Policy Implications</td>
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<td>2. Relying on Normative Theories</td>
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<td>Low to High</td>
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<td><strong>Under-Subscribed</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Shaping the Academic Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Participatory Research</td>
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