# From Policy Typologies to Policy Feedback



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Schattschneider (1935: 288) first suggested that policy could be the cause as well as the effect of politics, in arguing that 'new policies create a new politics.' Eckstein (1960) made a similar point in his study of the British Medical Association. But Lowi took the insight farther in providing a basis for classifying policies that challenged the dominant pluralist paradigm by limiting its applicability to a more limited range of cases.

Lowi's policy typology suggested that the pattern of politics described by the pluralists was largely confined to the politics surrounding one type of policy only: what he termed 'regulatory', which provoked participation by well-organised interest groups. Critics of pluralism had been quick to point to policy decisions that defied the pluralist pattern, such as 'iron triangles' formed by interest groups, bureaucrats and either single firm actors or narrowly focused groups that benefited from what was often a raid on the public purse — largely unopposed by those who had to foot the bill. Perhaps the strongest of all iron triangles was that in defence procurement, the 'military-industrial complex' that Eisenhower warned against in his farewell address — a warning that went largely unheeded. The influence of the military-industrial complex was, in fact, enhanced by the development of input-output models, such as the Regional Input-Output Modeling System (RIMS II) and National-Regional Impact Evaluation System (NRIES), that could be used to inform members of Congress of the impact of particular defence procurement decisions — Congressional district by Congressional district (Office of Economic Adjustment, 1983; see also Lapp, 1968).

Schattschneider (1935, 1960) had been particularly vocal in warning of the dangers posed by iron triangles, and it was in making sense of the differences between tariff politics studied by Schattschneider and tariff politics a generation later that Lowi (1964) differentiated between 'distributive' tariff policies and 'regulatory' tariff policies. Before developing his typology for national government, Lowi had in his doctoral dissertation also distinguished 'redistributive' policies where parties, rather than groups, were the significant actors, and had thus sketched out the preliminary elements of his 'Arenas of Power' (1964a). His initial formulation in his review essay — pitched 'over the transom' to *World Politics* — extended this to the national level while he was a research fellow at the Brookings Institution, reading the foundational statutes of agencies.

Lowi's 'Arenas of Power' approach to policy typologies has been enormously influential in theorising about public policy. It is a standard inclusion in any work covering theories of public policy. (See, for example, Smith and Larimer, 2009; Cairney, 2011). The original formulation has received 2,780 citations according to Google Scholar; his 1972, more complete formulation has 1683 citations, but his 1970 paper between these, also a review essay, has drawn only 143. But, as this paper shows, while it has been fruitful and suggestive there have been problems with the Arenas of Power, and the book of that title that eventually appeared in 2009 had been promised as early as the original 1964 paper, when Lowi wrote 'The scheme for national politics which is presented in this article is an adaptation of the national "arenas of power" discussed in a book now in preparation' (Lowi, 1964: 688n). The book, when it arrived, was not a monograph refining and applying the Arenas of Power approach, but an anthology, a collection of Lowi's previously published writings on the matter (Lowi, 2009).

Arenas of Power can therefore be seen as having much promise, but promise that has been incompletely fulfilled, and much of the related scholarship centred on the political impact of policy has over the past couple of decades been broadened out into the terminology of 'policy feedback' (Pierson, 1993; 2006). While this has been insightful, Pierson's approach has replaced a four-celled matrix with a six-celled matrix: two types of mechanism ('resource and incentive effects' and 'interpretive effects') on one dimension and thee types of actors affected by feedback mechanisms ('government elites', 'interest groups' and 'mass publics'). The two interest group cells contain four and two factors each, so the policy feedback matrix is rather less theoretically parsimonious than Lowi's Arenas of Power.

In this paper I review critically both Lowi's approach and that of Pierson (as the leading advocate of policy feedback). I will argue that Lowi's approach has been limited by a couple of issues that can be remedied relatively easily, and that when this is done, the less parsimonious policy feedback approach — while it provides additional insights — is less justified. I look briefly first at Lowi's Arenas of Power, its problems and suggest a revision, before turning to Pierson's seminal work on the policy feedback approach.

**Policy Types: The Arenas of Power**

Lowi developed the Arenas of Power while engaged in research in Washington spending most of his time, not in Congress (as he had intended) but reading statutes in the Brookings Institution, 'reading organic statutes (as amended) that created a particular department or agency and gave it its mission, its powers and jurisdiction' (Lowi, 2009: 11).

Lowi sought to make sense of the shift in the politics of tariff policy in the US from the Hawley-Smoot Act of 1930 as captured by Schattschneider and the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, when 'the free trade cause . . . won because tariff had finally lost its traditional definition (Lowi, 1964: 683n). Schattschneider also noticed the change, remarking that 'Everything has changed—procedure, the nature of the conflict, the alignments, the strategy, and the results.' (Schattschneider, 1965: 344). Lowi saw that while, as an issue area, tariff policy was still tariff policy it had changed significantly in the way in which it impacted upon politics. In 1962, tariff policy gave rise to a pluralist pattern of politics, whereas in 1935 Schattschneider described tariff policy as 'A policy that is so hospitable and catholic as the protective tariff disorganizes the opposition.' (Schattschneider, 1935: 88). Lowi's insight was that these were two different types of policy, and they gave rise to different types of politics. Hawley-Smoot was a Distributive policy, and the Trade Expansion Act was a Regulatory policy. Both Lowi (1964: 695n) and Schattschneider (1965: 344) saw something of the socialization of conflict the latter emphasised in his *The Semi-Sovereign People.* He also recognized that both these were of a different type to social welfare or income tax policy, which he termed Redistributive.

Lowi's logic ran as follows:

> (1) The types of relationships to be found among people are determined by their expectations—by what they hope to achieve or get from relating to others. (2) In politics, expectations are determined by governmental outputs or policies. (3) Therefore, a political relationship is determined by the type of policy at stake, so that for every type of policy there is likely to be a distinctive type of political relationship.' (Lowi, 1964: 688).

The arena surrounding Distributive policies was best characterized in the terms of Schattschneider's findings; the Regulatory arena corresponded to the pluralist school (the general notions of which were limited pretty much to this one arena); and the

Redistributive arena most closely approximated an elitist view of the political process, when coalitions were so broad so stable as to serve as the basis for parties and ideologies (Lowi, 1964: 692). Lowi was thus able to capture the dynamic manner in which single firms, sector groups and peak associations coalesced and fractured depending on what was at stake:

> Let us say, in brief, that on Monday night the big associations meet in agreement and considerable cohesion on "the problem of government," the income tax, the Welfare State. On Tuesday, facing regulatory issues, the big associations break up into their constituent trade and other specialized groups, each prepared to deal with special problems in its own special ways, usually along subject-matter lines. On Wednesday night still another fission takes place as the pork barrel and the other forms of subsidy and policy patronage come under consideration. The parent groups and "catalytic groups" still exist, but by Wednesday night they have little identity (Lowi, 1964: 709).

There was initially no fourth cell in the matrix, but Lowi was to yield to what he himself referred to as ‘'the easy infinitude of four-cell tables' (Lowi, 1967:238). Lowi initially thought foreign policy ‘is obviously a fourth category’ (Lowi, 1964: 689n), but the fourth cell was to be filled with ‘Constituent policy’ — the setting up of a new agency (Lowi, 1967).

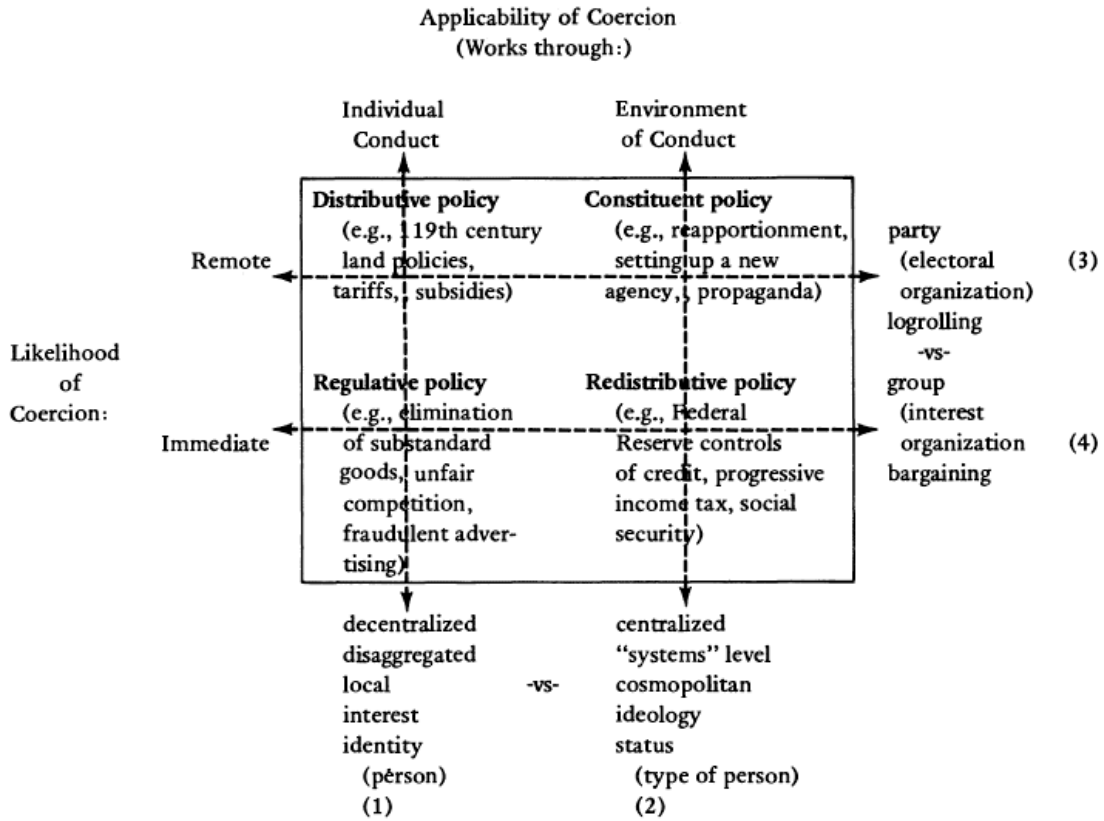
Numerous criticisms were raised over issues such as the difficulty in placing policies into categories in practice (Kjellberg, 1977: 556-7; Wilson, 1973: 328-9) and observations that that policies could appear to change categories *during* the policy process (Hayes, 1978: 156). The first of these is suggestive of problems with the definition of policy types, but the latter should perhaps not be seen as a problem, because the type of policy is something that is surely open to human agency. There are clear advantages in framing public policies as Distributive– narrowing the scope of conflict by providing benefits while being unlikely to excite opposition. The appeal of public works policies is widely appreciated and was captured by an aphorism attributed to Nikita Khruschev: 'Politicians are the same the world over - they promise a bridge, even when there is no river.' (A key component of Keynesian pump-priming policies or policies that lead to inflation have the added advantage of spreading costs not to large numbers of people spread widely geographically, but to those in the future. More on this temporal factor later). There are clearly good reasons for defining

policies in particular ways, or redefining them in ways that might increase or diminish their chances of adoption, seeking to expand or limit the scope of conflict, as Schattschneider would put it, because the definition of alternatives was for him the supreme instrument of power (Schattschneider, 1975: 68).

It was inevitable that there be a fourth policy type once Lowi sought to elaborate the categories according to two dimensions relating to coercion: whether coercion was applied directly to individuals or through the environment of conduct; and (initially) whether the likelihood of coercion being applied by government was high or low. While he persisted with the 'likelihood of coercion' dimension as the basis of the arenas for some time, Lowi came to the conclusion that it 'lacked jurisprudential value and encouraged circular reasoning' (2008:16). He used the dichotomy of H.L.A. Hart between Primary Rules (that impose duties) and Secondary Rules (that confer powers, public or private – that provide *facilities*). The architecture of the typology in 1972 is provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1

TYPES OF COERCION, TYPES OF POLICY, AND TYPES OF POLITICS



Wilson (1973) offered a version of Lowi's categories that essentially used the key distinction as to whether the costs and benefits of policies were public or private — with private benefits providing a stronger incentive for groups to form and cohere than public goods, which usually fell victim to the 'free rider problem.' If nobody could be excluded from enjoying the benefits (or suffering the costs) resulting from group action, groups concerned with such issues would be underorganised. So some interests were more readily organised into politics than others, and as Schattschneider put it 'organization is itself a mobilization of bias' (1975:30).

Wilson's version of Lowi's typology and others like it (including by this author — Kellow, 1981, 1988) thus saw Distributive polices as involving the provision of private or narrowly focused benefits at the expense of all consumers or all taxpayers, with costs spread so widely as to not excite opposition or the formation of opposing groups. Regulatory policies involved private costs and benefits, resulting in organised groups mobilising on both sides of the issue in the pluralist pattern. Redistributive policies involved costs and benefits that were widespread, but which coincided with the dominant conflict in society, the struggle between haves and have-nots that served as the basis for ideologies and political parties. As Schattschneider (1975) would have put it, their attachment to this dominant cleavage of conflict made it less likely that they would mobilise around other kinds of issues. And the fourth cell was filled with a category that was essentially Regulation of narrowly defined interests in the public interest, where the vagaries of public interest group mobilisation made them vulnerable to being assuaged by the provision of symbolic, rather than substantive, rewards as Murray Edelman (1964) had described, often resulting in regulatory failure. Significantly, Lowi's typology fails to account for this important policy type.

On this point, the 'public choice' interpretation of the arenas of power came close to a problem Lowi dealt with in his *The End of Liberalism*: the granting of broad legislative delegations to bureaucratic agencies (policy-without-law), rather than the enactment of legislation which, because of its clarity, would provide outcomes more consistent with the intentions of legislators (rule-of-law). The 'interest group liberalism' Lowi described often also included mandated avenues of participation by interest groups during implementation. Lowi and Edelman were essentially describing the same phenomenon here, with policy-without-law providing a means of responding to the conflicts of Lowi's 'interest group liberalism', turning policies into the placebo

responses Edelman described by allowing organised groups to continue lobbying during policy implementation, while the constituencies of public interest groups evaporated, symbolically reassured by the mere act of policy adoption.

Lowi has determinedly opposed a public choice interpretation of his arenas of power (see Lowi, 1988), perhaps especially because the thesis of *The End of Liberalism* was seen by some as standing alongside public choice accounts of bureaucracy and the growth of government as providing the rationale for Reaganomics and other manifestations of neo-liberalism. Lowi enthusiastically rejected attempts to give him the intellectual credit for these developments, and was a persistent commentator on what he saw as the pernicious effects of economics on American political science (Lowi, 1991).

This discussion points to two important problems with Lowi's typology, and perhaps the reason why the promised research monograph *Arenas of Power* has not not been delivered as first promised in 1964. The problems are these: 1. regardless of whether we take a public choice approach or a coercion approach, one of the policy types is in the wrong quadrant in Lowi's matrix; and 2. the establishment of a new agency is a logically different act from other kinds of policy that allocate value and should not be seen as being of the same kind of policy.

The two problems are related, both having their roots in the very basis for Lowi's four cells. To take the second point first, whether we are talking about establishing a formal organisation or an institution without formal organisational existence, regime theory suggests to us that they both embody rules, norms and regular patterns of behaviour. It is possible to establish (to 'constitute') a regime that has a Regulatory or a Redistributive function, and both might or might not actually deliver on the promise they hold for later delivering outcomes. It is even possible to conceive of a Distributive regime, one that allows considerable discretion to allocate benefits on an individual basis.

The move to policy feedback approach acknowledges quite explicitly that policies are institutions (Pierson, 2006)—perhaps not surprising given its linkages with historical institutionalism—so the adoption of any policy can be seen as constituting an institution. It should be noted that while Lowi was focused on the immediate politics surrounding policy adoption, he did recognise (albeit obliquely, and in his largely

overlooked article) that he was, in criticising the behaviouralist focus on individual conduct, drawing attention to the 'rules and norms, institutions and other social structures that any individual or interpersonal behaviour must presuppose.' (Lowi, 1970: 314).

It is arguable that, however, that (in the tradition of Bertrand Russell's Theory of Logical Types) the act of establishing an institution that can perform a function cannot belong to the same category as that function itself. Russell held that a class cannot be a member of itself (Whitehead and Russell, 1910). Neither can one of the members be the class, since the term used for the class is a different level of abstraction from the terms used for its members. It is a different logical type. Recall that Lowi derived his Arenas inductively, after sitting in Brookings 'reading organic statutes (as amended) that created a particular department or agency and gave it its mission, its powers and jurisdiction' — the statutes that *constituted* agencies that fitted into what were then his three categories of public policy. If the act of establishing a formal organisation is Constituent policy, Constituent policy cannot logically sit alongside the Distributive, Regulatory and Redistributive policy types, since it cannot both describe the process of constitution and be a possible result of that process. Constituent policy is undoubtedly important, but it cannot sit alongside the other policy types.

Returning to the first point, the problem with the location of policy types in quadrants relates to the Distributive and Redistributive types. With both, the coercion (or the cost) is displaced onto the broad range of taxpayers or consumers as a whole. The size of the benefits provided and the costs (and coercion) is likely to be much smaller with Distributive policies than with Redistributive policies, but this does not amount to a different type of coercion. One can conceive of a very modest Redistributive policy that provided less in benefits (and therefore had smaller costs) than a very large Distributive policy. Size, in short, should not matter. We would expect, therefore, that Distributive and Redistributive policies would have something in common and would be in either the same row or column in the matrix. They are not: they are in diametrically opposite corners of the matrix.

This suggests that there is a problem, not with the basic argument that policy determines politics, but with the basis for classification, and that the public choice version of the matrix is more internally consistent. But does this mean that we should

abandon Lowi's more state centred approach for a rational choice approach? Not necessarily so. Policies are not necessarily framed just in terms of costs and benefits. Moreover, the reasons we should not necessarily accept an economic explanation are also consistent with our seeing constituent policy as being in a logically distinct category from the main policy types.

This is because we must regard the economic basis of public choice theory as institutional in nature. In short, markets are institutions created and sustained by governments. This point was made by Lowi himself (1993) in setting out the functional prerequisites of markets that must be provided by governments. All economics, as Lowi put it, is *political* economy — a point Adam Smith made which has been lost by many of his ideological disciples. Whether goods or bads are public or private (whether or not they are 'excludable') depends partly upon their inherent characteristics, but ultimately upon the definition of property rights by governments, which can render them excludable or non-excludable. From the time of the enclosure of commons, governments have been conveying public property in to private hands and (more rarely) vice versa. To give an obvious example, roads have been public or private at various stages of history, with privatisation becoming more common recently in order to manage congestion — witness London's congestion charges which involves 'excludability' applied to a publicly owned road system for a public policy purpose. (Rivalness is another characteristic of private goods, but all public goods can potentially become rival if exclusion is not enforced and over-use results; see Peston, 1972).

Property rights are established and enforced by governments as part of markets — institutions constituted by governments. And they are enforced by the use of coercion to enforce property rights and contracts. As Jeremy Bentham (1931: 113) put it, 'Property and law are born together, and die together. Before laws were made there was no property; take away laws, and property ceases.'[1] So at base there is no inherent conflict between a public choice perspective on arenas of power and one which distinguishes on the basis of how coercion is employed. Zysman (1994: 243) has put this perhaps more directly than most: 'Markets do not exist or operate apart

[1] The exceptions to state specification of property rights are rare, and certainly do not support any general view of the emergence of property rights in advance of state specification. On exception was during the California gold rush, where the frontier ran in advance of the state, but the system of rights that emerged among the miners was very quickly ratified subsequently by legislation (Umbeck, 1977).

from the rules and institutions that establish them and that structure how buying, selling and the very organization of production takes place.' Economic explanations are inescapably institutional explanations.

So we can conclude that a version of arenas of power that is organised on the basis of public and private costs and benefits might be a simplified 'economistic' version of an institutional basis for distinguishing between policy types, but it is more internally consistent than Lowi's 'coercion-based' version, though might simply reflect a deeper institutional basis that might use coercion as its basis. What might the bases for such a categorisation be: what might be the dichotomies defining the four cells be? And can they be defined so as to save Lowi from the jaws of public choice theory (as he would prefer)?

It seems to me that they can. Lowi might have done better to have abandoned his 'individual conduct/environment of conduct' dichotomy as well as his 'likelihood of coercion' dichotomy when he found salvation in Hart, because Hart's analysis would seem potentially to be able to be split to cover *both* dimensions. Hart's Primary Rules impose duties, while his Secondary Rules confer public or private powers. If the restrictions on conduct that duties comprise can be considered to include 'costs', and powers conferred by Secondary Rules can be considered as incorporating 'benefits', then we can see the possibility of subsuming a public choice approach to arenas of power, with 'costs and benefits' being subsumed by more the more general language of 'duties and powers' (or 'duties and facilities') that include non-economic forms. All it then takes is for us to accept that duties — like powers — might be public *or* private and we can incorporate the public choice approach into the arenas of power in a way that places the Distributive and Redistributive policy categories in the correct quadrants, as involving the same duties, as well as providing for that variant of Regulatory Policy (Regulation in the public interest) that sees private duties imposed in order to provide public 'facilities'.

This suggested revision to the Arenas of Power, using the full potential of Hart's distinction between Primary and Secondary Rules, and substituting Public Interest Regulatory Policy for Constituent Policy, is provided in Figure 2. Such a reconfiguration allows for the possibility that a policy of any type might constitute an institution, and correctly places Distributive and Redistributive policy types together on one dimension.

**Figure 2.**

**POSSIBLE REVISED ARENAS OF POWER**

| | | PRIMARY RULES (Duties) | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Public | Private |
| SECONDARY RULES (Powers, Facilities) | Public | **Redistributive** | **Public Interest Regulatory** |
| | Private | **Distributive** | **Private Interest Regulatory** |

Having attempted to rehabilitate Lowi's policy typology and before moving on to discuss the policy feedback approach which has emerged more recently, let me deal with one remaining issue with Lowi's typology: the moral dimension. Spitzer (1987) sought to accommodate morals-based regulation as a separate type of policy to 'old' or economic regulation, but I have previously resisted his attempt to load up the typology with additional categories on the grounds that to do so is to erode the parsimony that should be exhibited by good social science theory (Goodin, 1976: 6-7). While it is undoubtedly true that the distinction between a 'logic of appropriateness' and a 'logic of consequences' (March & Olsen, 1983), it would seem that the typology recast in terms of Hart's powers and duties should be able to readily accommodate normative considerations, bearing in mind Henry Shue's observation that we should not assume that interests and norms always (or even usually) clash: 'When they clash and when they converge upon the same answer, are precisely the questions.' (Shue, 1995: 456). And Bruce Yandle (1989) has pointed out, coalitions between morals campaigners and interest-based actors are frequently found in successful regulatory policies, and even with Distributive policies strong normative

arguments disarm potential opponents: the iron triangles of defence procurements were undoubtedly assisted by the normative argument in favour of national defence, especially during the Cold War.

**Pierson and Policy Feedback**

Lowi's typology has stimulated considerable scholarship since its inception (see, for example: Anderson, 1997; Champney, 1988; Greenberg, *et al.* 1977; Gustavsson, 1980; Hayes, 1978, 2007; Heckathorn & Maser, 1990; Kellow, 1981; 1988; 2009; Kjellberg, 1977; Smith, 2002; Spitzer, 1987), including a reference to it in international relations (Underdal, 1979). In the past 20 years, however, much research — while retaining a commitment to Lowi's central insistence that 'policy causes politics' — has moved quite explicitly to the 'policy feedback' approach that dates back to an article by Paul Pierson (1993), again a review essay, perhaps because of the problems with Lowi's approach discussed above (see, *inter alia*: Anglund,1999; Béland, 2010; Campbell, 2011, 2012; Coleman & Grant, 1998; Cram, 2011; Daugbjerg, 2003; Fernández & Jaime-Castillo, 2013; Karch, 2010; McDonagh, 2010; Mettler & SoRelle, 2014; Mettler & Welch, 2004; Patashnik & Zelizer, 2009; Soss, & Schram, 2007; Svallfors, 2010; Weaver, 2010; Wichowsky & Moynihan, 2008).

One issue with Lowi's typology and Wilson's variant has been that they were developed in the United States, in a particular historical and political context, and so some questioned the utility of Lowi's approach outside the US political system (Richardson and Jordan, 1979:100). While Eckstein (1960) had suggested such an approach in the UK, Pierson noted that it was 'probably no coincidence that the two significant efforts to develop "policies produce politics" typologies have been developed in American politics rather than comparative politics . . . .', but that this allowed Lowi and Wilson 'at least to attempt to "hold constant" elements of the broader political environment.' (Pierson, 1993: 625n). Further, Pierson observed that Lowi's typology started to break down when one studied the dynamics of policy struggles over time, suggesting that ' "Regulatory" policy seems to produce different politics in different historical contexts.' (Pierson, 1993: 625n). Pierson's 'policy feedback' approach was therefore anchored in historical institutionalism, where policies were seen as institutions (Pierson, 2006) that shaped politics, not just the politics surrounding their adoption, but subsequent politics for some time as policies shaped incentives and expectations in an on-going manner.

Pierson did not regard policy feedback as deriving from the typologies of Lowi and Wilson:

> Arguments about what is now often termed “policy feedback” are usually traced back to sources such as Lowi and Wilson. . . .These arguments, however, are really about the structure of *issues* and the associated (diffuse or concentrated) winners and losers. They are not arguments about how specific structures of public policy can influence politics. (Pierson, 2006: 126n)

Rather, he considered that the emergence of work along these lines stemmed largely from work by Theda Skocpol and her collaborators in the 1980s. A subsequent passage from Skocpol makes the point succinctly:

> Too often social scientists...forget that policies, once enacted, restructure subsequent political processes. Analysts typically look only for synchronic determinants of policies—for example, in current social interests or in existing political alliances. In addition, however, we must examine patterns unfolding over time. . . . We must make social policies the starting points as well as the end points of analysis. (Skocpol, 1995: 58).

Pierson was careful to stress that his approach was not ‘an effort to follow the well-known attempts of analysts like Lowi and Wilson to develop an extremely parsimonious theory linking specific policy "types" to particular political outcomes.’ (Pierson, 1993: 625). He suggested two reasons why their typologies were unlikely to provide a sound basis for theory building. The first was that individual policies might have several politically relevant characteristics, which might have a multiplicity of consequences. The second was that policy feedback rarely operates in isolation from features of the broader political environment (such as institutional structures and the dynamics of party systems), so that the impact of policies was likely to take place in interaction with other variables. Pierson therefore suggested that it was unlikely that we could expect to develop ‘sweeping theories that link a few policy "types" to clearly defined political outcomes. Instead, a more promising strategy is to develop middle-range theories that acknowledge both the complexity of feedback and its context-specific qualities.’ (Pierson, 1993: 625).

While it is certainly true that Lowi did not deal significantly with the longer term politics engendered by public policies, as noted above, he certainly asserted the importance of institutions as providing the context within which politics is conducted,

but did so in an article that is widely overlooked (Lowi, 1970). And he quite specifically sought to answer Werner Sombart's question about the absence of socialism in the United States by noting that the Constitution largely withheld *competence* for Redistributive policies from the federal level for much of its history (Lowi, 1984).

Pierson focuses on political action, and misses much of the significance of *inaction* that Schattschneider drew attention to: it is surely the *failure* of the losers in distributive policies to mobilise that is an essential element of the politics surrounding distributive policies; and the tendency for the constituencies of public interest groups to remain inactive during policy implementation is what characterises the symbolic policy response described by Murray Edelman (1964). That said, adding explicitly the temporal dimension to Lowi's typology is helpful — both in emphasizing the persistent impact of continuing policies on politics, and understanding the political popularity of public works projects, not just when they might be justified by Keynesian theory, but when there is no macroeconomic justification, because they displace costs through time. The policy feedback of historical institutionalism has added considerable value in this respect.

As Pierson (1993: 596) notes, 'major public policies also constitute the rules of the game', which underscores the point above that Lowi's Constituent category represents not a separate type of policy, but a function that might occur with any policy. Such institutions influence 'the allocation of economic and political resource, modifying the costs and benefits associated with alternative political strategies, and consequently altering ensuing political development' (Pierson, 1993: 596). 'If interest groups shape policies, policies also shape interest groups.' (Pierson, 1993: 598). So policies provide incentives and resources that might facilitate or inhibit the formation or expansion of particular groups, where incentives stem primarily from the major social consequences of specific government actions, the 'spoils' that provide a strong motivation for beneficiaries to mobilize in favor of maintaining or expanding existing programs (Pierson, 1993: 599).

Ultimately, Pierson produces his own categorization of the manner in which policies might feed back on politics. He produces a six-celled matrix (see Figure 3) setting out two main feedback mechanisms (resource/ incentive effects and interpretive effects) acting on three sets of actors (government elites, social groups, and mass publics)

(Pierson, 1993: 624-25). The framework includes six 'pathways of influence' whereby policies impact upon politics, but some pathways involve multiple sources of influence. Interest groups, for example, can be influenced by spoils, organizing niches, financing, access, policy learning and visibility/traceability

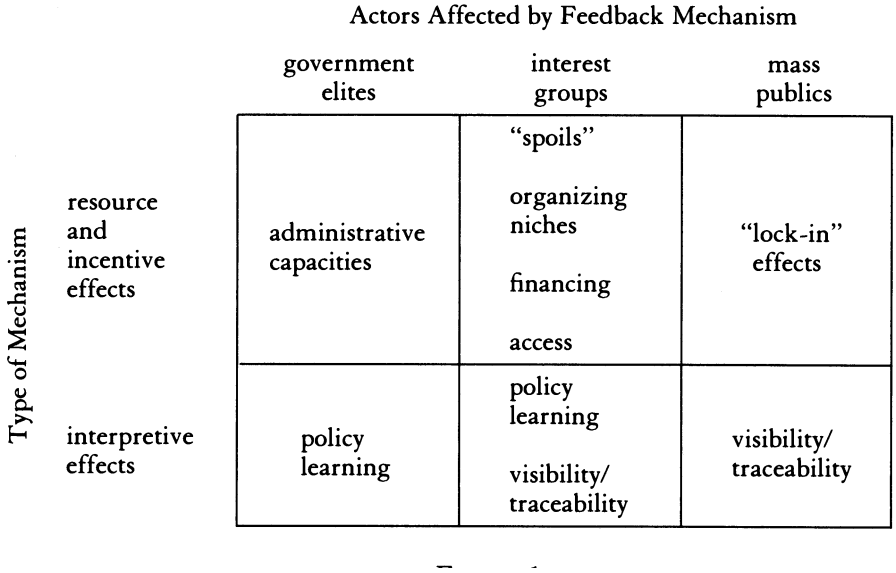



Figure 3

While Pierson's scheme includes more detail than Lowi's of Wilson's, it is far less parsimonious, and less elegant—and it still does not cover some significant factors. For example, it does not give any prominence to the negative impact of policies that is central to Distributive policies and Regulation of private interests in the public interest—and that lies at the heart of Schattschneider's perceptive analysis of politics, where the factors that result in non-participation are as, if not more, significant than those that that stimulate participation. Organisation, for Schattschneider, was the mobilization of bias, so that some concerns were organized into politics and others were not. The closest Pierson comes to including passivity is a remark that 'lock-in' leads to 'non-decisions' (Pierson, 1993: 610). Pierson (1993: 599) writes that 'Exactly who is induced to mobilise will often depend on the precise nature of policy interventions.' But he devotes little attention to the possibility that policies can also actively limit mobilization and produce passivity. It is precisely the disarming effect of Distributive polices that is the secret of their success, and the assuaging of the mass public so that they are not active during implementation that is key to Regulation in the public interest.

Pierson also seems to simply assume that policies that are described as 'regulatory' are necessarily Regulatory in terms of the Lowi/Wilson typology. He states that David Vogel's account of the response of American business to regulatory policy in the late 1960s and early 1970s 'provides an excellent example of how policy feedback generated new structures of interest representation.' (Pierson, 1993: 600). He quotes the following passage from Vogel:

> Among the most distinctive features of the regulatory statutes enacted during the first half of the 1970s was precisely that they were not directed toward specific industries. Rather, they sought to change the behavior of companies in a wide variety of different industries. This made many business executives much more conscious of their common or class interests, which in turn led to both the formation and revival of political organizations that represented firms in many different industries, such as the Business Roundtable, the United States Chamber of Commerce, and the National Federation of Independent Business. (Vogel, 1989: 13-14)

What Vogel appears to be describing is something of a shift towards the Redistributive quadrant, in Lowi's terms: essentially a shift from *private* primary rules to *public* primary rules. Policies that no longer sought to regulate 'specific industries' (read 'sectors'), were now being applied to business of a whole, and excited cohesion among peak business associations.

An interesting question, of course, is how such changes occur. One obvious source of change is ideas, particularly normative ideas as to what is appropriate. The shift Vogel describes essentially coincides with the emergence of postmaterial values, resulting in social and environmental regulation, and a reduced tolerance for special favours for particular sectors. A metaphor helps here. The state and its embedded structures are like the nucleus of a cell; policies are like messenger RNA, formed on the template of the state and communicating with the cytoplasm of society. Ideas are then like viruses, RNA that is capable of disrupting both mRNA and the DNA in the nucleus of state structures. Ideas are infectious and disruptive, and might even result in 'mutations' of state structures. 'Mutagenisis' can also result from other stochastic events (wars, depressions, other crises) but normative ideas—the logic of appropriateness—can change both the structures of the state and its policies.

What also should not be lost sight of is that policies and other institutions, including

the formal constitutions of states, are themselves ultimately the result of political action. Constitutions are meant to be more durable than other institutions, but even they are subject to revision, either by constitutional amendment mechanisms or judicial reinterpretation, usually as a result of struggles over the constitutional legality of policies that losers in the politics of policy-making take to the courts. While analytically it makes sense to focus on the effects of policies on politics, we should remember that we are dealing here with an instance of the structure-agency debate, and we should acknowledge that agency can also alter structure. To mention Giddens theory of structuration seems appropriate here (Giddens, 1984).

Finally, we might also note that we have some quasi-experiments that confirm the significance of policy feedback. At the transnational level the reality is governance without government, and we can trace quite clearly the emergence of interest groups and other political action in response to the formation of institutions and the development of policy. This is readily apparent in the development of the European Union with the 'pump priming of political action by EU institutions', as Coen (2007: 333) has put it, but also in the absence of groups in global governance in sectors such as mining until the emergence of global policy stimulated the formation of such groups as governance functions develop (see Kellow, 2006). Formation follows function.

**Conclusion**

Pierson's policy feedback approach provides considerable insight and nuance, and adds value by emphasizing the persistence of policies as institutions—that policies continue to have effects on politics beyond the process by which they are adopted.

A lingering question is whether the additional detail in Pierson's approach counterbalances the inevitable loss of theoretical parsimony and elegance from the earlier typologies of Lowi and Wilson. I suggest that the two approaches do not present dichotomous choices. The amendments to Lowi's typology suggested here deal with many of its difficulties while retaining its parsimony and (at least) retaining its explanatory power. Pierson's approach adds nuance, detail and (significantly) identifies policies as institutions that persist over time, while limiting its theoretical ambition to middle level theory. There is no reason why *both* cannot be used, because

both bring considerable insight to our understanding of the policy process.

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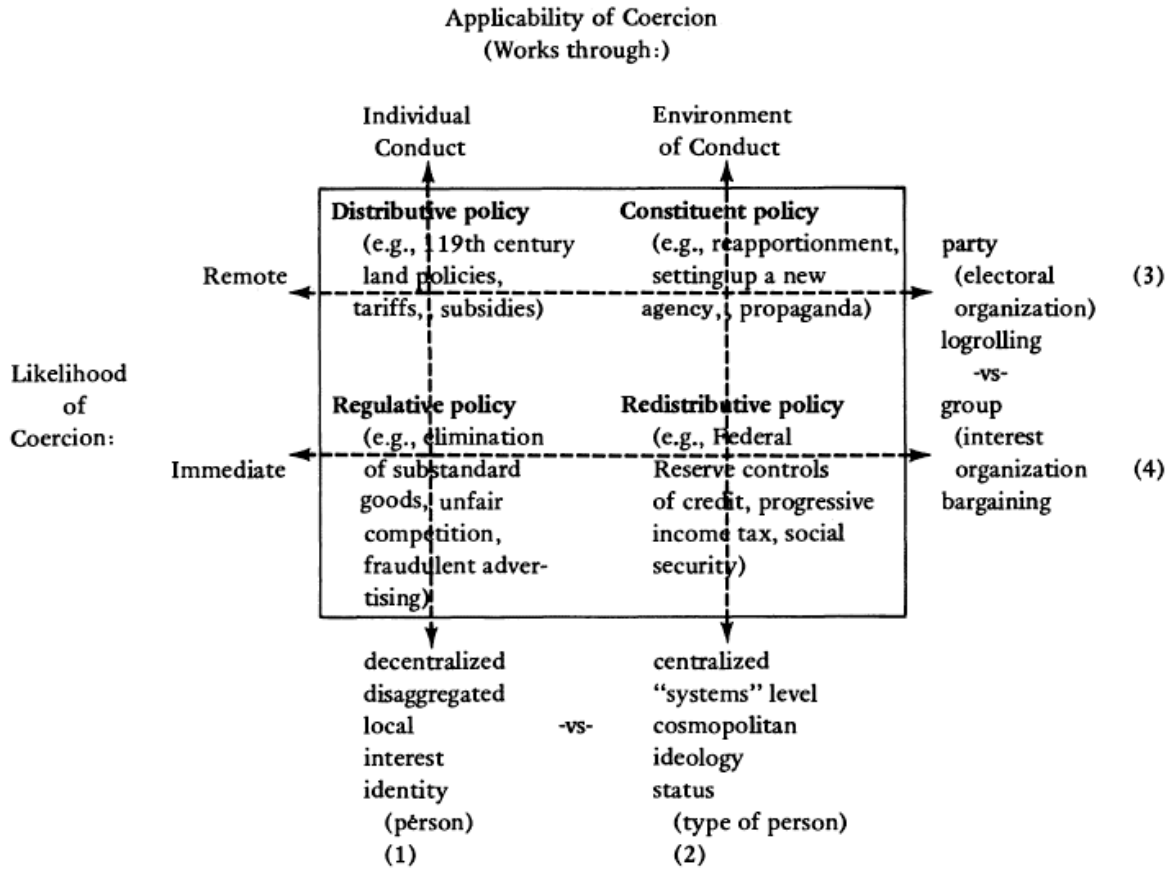
TYPES OF COERCION, TYPES OF POLICY, AND TYPES OF POLITICS



Actors Affected by Feedback Mechanism

| Type of Mechanism | government elites | interest groups | mass publics |
|---|---|---|---|
| resource and incentive effects | administrative capacities | "spoils"<br>organizing niches<br>financing<br>access | "lock-in" effects |
| interpretive effects | policy learning | policy learning<br>visibility/ traceability | visibility/ traceability |