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Theories of the Policy Process: Contemporary Scholarship and Future Directions

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The object of policy research is the understanding of the interaction among the machinery of the state, political actors, and the public. To facilitate this understanding, a number of complementary theories have developed in the course of more than two decades. This article reviews recent scholarship on the established theories of the policy process, mostly published in 2011 and 2012. Additionally, scholarship extending these theories is identified and new theories of policy process are discussed. This review finds that the established theories have generated substantive scholarship during the period under review and have also been the springboard for much of the recent thinking in policy research.

KEY WORDS: established theories of policy process, new theories of policy process, policy subsystems, policy networks, policy entrepreneurs

Introduction

The object of policy research is the understanding of the interactions among the machinery of the state, political actors, and the public. Being broadly defined, political actors can hold formal or informal positions in all governance levels. Their actions frequently produce pervasive public action; that is, action not solely limited to legislation, rules and regulations, and executive orders (John, 2012; Theodoulou & Cahn, 1995). To understand and explain this complex ". . . vast, turgid, self-centered, and highly emotional process" (George Kennan quoted in Gaddis, 2011, p. 308), scholars employ a large number of tools in the form of theories, models, and frameworks,[1] a great number of which have been developed and refined over the past three decades. Due to the plethora and complexity of the questions raised, these tools tend to be more complementary than contending (Peters & Pierre, 2006; Schlager & Weible, 2013).

The theoretical development and empirical investigation of some of the more established theories of the policy process have resulted in the refinement of frameworks, theories, and models; the sharpening of dependent and independent variables; and the broadening of contextual applicability. The prolificacy of the scholarship produced and the evolution and maturity of new theories over time necessitates that we pause regularly to map the topography of the literature. This is

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the aim of the current review, which updates Nowlin's work (2011) and is guided by the following questions: first, what is the character of contemporary research engendered by the established theories of the policy process—does it remain within the given theoretical delimitations, does it extend the theory or framework in new directions, or is it differentiated enough to constitute a new theory? Second, what constitutes an evolving trend and in what ways are these trends novel?

In order to answer these questions peer-reviewed scholarship published mostly[2] in 2011 and 2012 was surveyed in journals including the *American Journal of Political Science, American Political Science Review, American Review of Public Administration, European Journal of Public Policy, Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, Journal of Politics, Journal of Public Administration Theory and Practice, Journal of Public Policy, Policy Studies Journal,* and *Political Research Quarterly*. In addition, web searches were conducted with each of the frameworks and theories as keywords in Wiley Online Library, Sage, Google Scholar, and Web of Knowledge. Articles were chosen for their relevance in terms of theory development, because they addressed criticism previously leveled against the theory or framework such as a narrow scope and limited spatial applicability, and/or for their innovative methodology. Scholarship from policy-specific journals[3] emerging from the database searches was used only if it met the requirements above.

The work reviewed for this article suggests the following: first, the established theories of the policy process continue to generate meaningful research in the form of diverse case studies; there is also ongoing conceptual development through the investigation of a component of a theory or the synthesis of two or more theories, even with a comparative purpose. Second, the structure of established theories allows for theoretical extension either through fusion with other frameworks or by developing a new theory closely based on an established one. Third, the timing seems to be ripe to report on new theories of policy process signaled by a 2013 *Policy Studies Journal* issue. Finally, the vast majority of the work reviewed in this article, including the new theories, is the result of the collective effort by teams of researchers.

This article is divided into two sections. First I discuss research pertaining to the established theories of policy process, namely the Advocacy Coalition Framework, Institutional Analysis and Development, Social Construction and Design, Punctuated Equilibrium, Policy Diffusion, and Multiple Streams, and eventual conceptual extensions to these theories. Next I discuss evolving trends in the literature.

Established Theories

Advocacy Coalition Framework

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) (Jenkins-Smith, 1990; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1988, 1993; Sabatier & Weible, 2007) has been used as an analytical tool in numerous publications (at least 100 by 2007). Its synthetic nature lends itself to be parsed and studied with a focus on each individual component, including the rationale behind the formation of coalitions, policy learning, policy change, and the

role of policy brokers in the policymaking process. ACF-related scholarship published in the years 2011 and 2012 fell in two broad types: first, researchers applied ACF to diverse spatial and policy area contexts. Second, there was research with theory development ambitions mostly focusing on one component of the framework. Some drew from other theories to address shortcomings and criticisms, which is in line with the suggestions Weible et al. (2011) put forth in the introductory article to the 2011 *Policy Studies Journal* special issue on the Advocacy Coalition Framework. Weible et al. (2011) further suggest that future research use ACF in comparative policy research; investigate further policy-oriented learning; develop the role of coalition resources; use ACF in conjunction with other theories or frameworks (a statement supported also by Sotirov & Memmler, 2012); and finally, explore issues remaining largely unexplored, including coalition defection, public opinion, self-interest, political opportunity structures, multiple events contributing to policy change, negotiated agreements, and use the framework as a policy analysis tool.

More specifically, Pierce (2011) applies the framework to U.S. foreign policy and the creation of Israel, a subsystem very different to ones dealing with environmental or energy issues. He finds that its tenets hold and more specifically that certain heterogeneity of beliefs exists within advocacy coalitions, while "belief systems of advocacy coalitions may converge to share multiple beliefs with a single advocacy coalition while maintaining their stability" (p. 431). This may indicate the kind of beliefs a future policy change will reflect since the entire subsystem moves in one direction.[4]

ACF has recently been applied to understanding policy dynamics in a variety of country contexts. Maturity of the energy policy advocacy coalition and knowledge management through policy-oriented learning are suggested to be the drivers behind climate policy change in China. Nonetheless the influence of these coalitions on governmental action is a matter of degree (Stensdal, 2012). Policy learning and the dynamic interplay between belief systems and resources are shown to influence Kenya's biosafety regulatory policy, further broadening the geographies of ACF applicability (Kingiri, 2011). Conversely, in the Irish context, Adshead (2011) points out that it is the "coupling" (p. 77) of internal and external shocks that precipitates policy change. Adshead also highlights the importance of ACF as a comparative public policy tool, thus enabling a national context to be considered at the international level. Winkel and Sotirov (2011) take this further by comparing the national forest programs of Germany and Bulgaria in terms of the effect of such programs in policy core beliefs, policy learning, and the way powerful actors of diverging beliefs used such programs to gain power.

As mentioned earlier, several research articles take up components of the framework with theory development ambitions. The issue of coalition resources, a hitherto less developed aspect of the framework, is investigated by Nohrstedt (2011), who suggests some resources are more important than others thus pointing out the need for thinking vertically when it comes to resource salience. Nohrstedt also highlights the instrumentality of policy entrepreneurs in venue shopping and their part in achieving policy change. Policy entrepreneurs in the form of policy brokers and the role in policy change are investigated by Ingold and Varone (2011). They find that

policy brokers act as mediators seeking compromise between competing coalitions (see also Henry, Lubell, & McCoy, 2011) at times by attempting to prevent coalitions activating veto points; furthermore, self-interest factors in their calculus if they don't have strong beliefs regarding a particular policy.

Beliefs are a central theme of ACF. Methodological insights from policy network research are used to investigate beliefs and their relationship to the formation, structure, and stability of coalitions. Combining ACF with Resource Dependency Theory (RDT), Henry (2011a) finds that people prefer to network with people of similar beliefs while they avoid doing so with people of dissimilar beliefs. However, it appears that the avoidance effect among actors of divergent beliefs is of greater salience than the desire to network with actors of similar beliefs (Henry et al., 2011). Additionally, people do not network with others solely because they seek power, but also because they enjoy networking with people of the same ideology; nonetheless, power seems to be a predictor of network formation among coalitions with similar goals. Matti and Sandström (2011) also find that similarity of beliefs and not the perception of influence has a significant effect on the formation of coalitions.

Individual actors with dissimilar "core" values experience belief polarization when information is exchanged between them (biased assimilation) and that contributes to the emergence—and persistence over time—of polarized networks (Henry, 2011b). What is more, scientists may be more divided than other subsystem participants (Montpetit, 2011). Indeed, Montpetit argues that the scientific world and the world of politics are highly interconnected. This is evidenced in the fact that controversy in a subsystem generated scientific uncertainty. But what if the individuals fall outside the formal subsystem? In other words, how do, for example, citizen advocates structure their thinking about policy issues? ACF's focus is on formal actors and scientists, but Henry and Dietz (2011, p. 248) recognize the importance of individual actors ("the organic gardener, the volunteer wildlife educator . . .") and use it in conjunction with Values-Beliefs-Norms to investigate how individuals form environmental cognition.

Understanding the architecture of beliefs and how they affect the structure of coalitions is a very important aspect of ACF (Ingold 2011), but the interaction among coalitions is not the only driver of policy change. External shocks can alter the course of policy. Albright (2011) argues for the adjustment of the framework to allow for the combination of external shocks (such as a flood) *and* internal shocks (such as democratization in Hungary) to provide the impetus for policy change through policy-oriented learning.

Institutional Analysis and Development

The Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework has its origins in the work of Kiser and E. Ostrom (1982) and seeks to understand the influence of institutions on the behavior of individuals (E. Ostrom, 2007). More specifically, it is a multi-scalar map (E. Ostrom, 2011), which provides common linguistic components necessary to facilitate communication across diverse disciplines including political science, economics, anthropology, geography, law, and social psychology. Additional

features of the framework include multiple, self-governed decision points interconnected by "nestedness"; the importance of rules in incentivizing the actions of individuals; the fallible nature of people and learning through mistakes; and the centrality of choice in institutional change and policymaking arrangements (E. Ostrom, 2007, 2011). Considerable IAD research is devoted to common pool resource theory but that body of work is not within the scope of this article and therefore only articles relating to institutions are included in this review.

The issue of trust is central in IAD as it is in ACF and a great deal of research has already focused on different aspects of it, though Henry (2011c) points out that most of the extant research on trust in highly complex polycentric arrangements that concern sustainability issues has been *trust in actions*. He identifies the need for research in *trust in information*, a very important feature of sustainability debates, where trust in scientific information is crucial. Henry draws from the ACF literature to incorporate research on belief structures in an effort to lay the groundwork for a more robust theory of trust. Such a coupling of frameworks is in line with calls for future research by Weible et al. (2011) as well as Blomquist and deLeon (2011).

Bushouse (2011) asks "what is childcare" (Blomquist & deLeon, 2011, p. 2) and with that as a departure point, moves beyond issues of common pool resources—the most frequent application of the IAD—to examine the delivery of club goods, for example enterprises providing child-care services. By applying IAD, Bushouse attempts to disentangle the many and nested decision-making processes; she goes beyond the sectoral classification (public, private, non-profit) and argues that different constitutional-level choice environments constitute different governance structures. Such a classification is the first step toward a better understanding of the delivery of goods (Bushouse, 2011).

Several articles extend the analytical leverage of the IAD by fusing it with other approaches such as the Local Public Economies (LPE) approach and Social-Ecological Systems (SES) as well as by developing distinct analytical concepts and tools firmly based on IAD (McGinnis, 2011a; E. Ostrom & Basurto, 2011).

Extending the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework. Wilderness is the basic good provided in one of two recent articles investigating contextual structural complexity using the IAD in conjunction with an LPE approach. LPE is a research program preceding the onset of the development of the IAD framework, but is underpinned by the same inspirations (McGinnis, 2011b), including the concept of polycentric governance (Oakerson & Parks, 1999; V. Ostrom, Tiebout, & Warren, 1961). First, Oakerson and Parks (2011) focus on the complexity of the regional governance of wilderness areas by conducting a meso-level analysis as an extension of the micro-level work of the IAD. They posit that the added value of conceptualizing protected areas as LPEs is a better understanding of multi-jurisdictional, multi-organizational arrangements comprising the common pool resource contexts.

Polycentric governance and the logic of LPEs also underpin the article by McGinnis (2011a) that introduces the concept of Network of Adjacent Situations (NAAS) as a means of theoretically extending the IAD framework. McGinnis focuses on the core

concept of the framework—the action situation—by exploring the horizontal complexity and interactions among these action situations. In other words, an action situation affects the workings of another at the same level of analysis thus forming a network with polycentricity as a main component (McGinnis, 2011a).

Conversely, E. Ostrom and Basurto (2011) develop a diagnostic and measuring tool to study the evolution of norms and rules. Drawing from the concept of evolution in natural sciences, the authors recognize that change is an integral part of institutions. This tool creates the language to describe the structure of rules at a hypothetical time zero and a later point time in order to track the processes and nature of institutional change. They create a rule classification system based on IAD and game theory exemplified in the relatively small and well-studied milieu of Nepalese irrigation systems with the underline assumption that seven components comprise all human interactions: actors, positions, actions, control, information, outcomes, and costs and benefits. E. Ostrom and Basurto point out that change does not always mean change for the better; understanding how rules change within an institution through conscious and unconscious processes, trial and error, and conflict might combat the top-down, one-size-fits-all rule structure imposition to institutions in developing countries, thus addressing the normative "so what" question.

Conversely, Heikkila, Schlager, and Davis (2011) contribute to the theoretical advancement of IAD by investigating cross-scale linkages with data from 14 interstate river settings in the United States. They envision these settings as social-ecological systems (see Anderies, Janssen, & E. Ostrom, 2004; E. Ostrom, 2007, 2009) and the linkages formed across diverse actors in different levels of analysis are sorted out, analyzed, and assessed using E. Ostrom's design principles (2007). The authors find that in basins where states faced more severe challenges the linkages were more extensive, whereas compacts with fewer challenges invested less in linkages. What is more, compacts with more constitutional linkages tended to have more linkages established by collective choice bodies. More "quality" linkages were identified around monitoring and collective choice decision-making but less around enforcement and conflict resolution. Indeed there are limits as to the applicability of the Common Pool Resource (CPR) quality criteria in vertical linkages and enforcement and monitoring linkages usually occur vertically.

Social Construction and Design

Normative aspects of policymaking were addressed by the social construction of target population and policy design framework, originally by Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram (1993). Policymakers manipulate, respond to, and perpetuate social constructions of target groups; that is, portions of the population receiving benefits or being burdened by costs, partially because it reinforces the policymakers' gains of political capital (Ingram, Schneider, & deLeon, 2007). A positively constructed group, for example the military, is deserving of benefits, whereas a welfare queen (single mother, usually of color) is unequivocally undeserving of benefits.

In a recent article, Schneider (2012) applies social construction to analyze patterns of change of punishment policy in American states from 1890 to 2008, a policy area which lends itself to the negative construction of a target population—criminals. The study found that policy change was synchronous and not convergent, meaning that states changed their punishment policy toward the same direction but they kept their relative position vis-à-vis other states. Change in policy happened roughly at about the same time triggered by shocks at the federal level, but not all states have punishment policies of the same level: western and southern states, for example tend to be the most punitive. States' relative position remained the stable over time, which indicates high levels of "feed-forward" effects. Finally, policy learning was not based on rational choices on the bases of policy efficacy, but rather based on the efficacy of political capital stemming from the increasing incarceration rates of the demonized population (Schneider, 2012).

Hudson and Gonyea (2012) apply the social construction of target populations to the aged. They map the shift of the Baby Boomer generation from Dependent to Advantaged and most recently to Contender status. The authors contend that as the image of the Baby Boomer generation fractures, the aged will no longer be a singular political constituency. As the Contenders will continue fight for their benefits, the vulnerability of the Dependents will be reinforced as a group relying on charity for their well being.

The social construction of groups is used together with ACF to understand change in intergroup perceptions over time. More specifically, Weible, Siddiki, and Pierce (2011) ask "to what extent do intergroup perceptions change as contexts change from adversarial to collaborative?" (p. 500). With questionnaire data from the Lake Tahoe Basin spanning over two decades, the authors conducted a quantitative study on social construction of groups, which is part of the added value of this article as most of the research in this field tends to be qualitative. They find that groups will be perceived more positively and more powerfully in collaborative contexts but perceptions take at least a decade to change and they change for all groups, not just the disadvantaged ones. In terms of ACF, the authors find a decrease in the devil shift, meaning that the groups are not as vilified as an earlier point in time, but this is not accompanied by an increase in the angel shift.

Punctuated Equilibrium

Punctuated equilibrium theory (PET) seeks to explain the observation that political processes comprise long periods of stability spiked by points of disequilibrium. The grounding of PET is that the continuity of institutions creates policy stability (Baumgartner & Jones, 1991, 1993; True, Jones, & Baumgartner, 2007), which over time creates a gap between the status quo and observed policy outcomes. The system bursts when exogenous shocks (such as new information) cause dynamic change and throw the system into a positive feedback loop creating a new equilibrium (Breunig & Koski, 2012).

A key question PET seeks to answer is how policymakers prioritize issues they address (vis-à-vis preferences in other frameworks) based on the flow of information

they receive and process. In other words, "PET centers on the collective allocation of attention to disparate aspects of the policy process, and how shifts in attention can spawn large changes in policymaking (Jones & Baumgartner, 2012, p. 17). In applying PET to the allocation of presidential attention, Larsen-Price (2012) finds that when presidents shift their attention toward a specific policy, they often do so using more than one policy tool available to them, *inter alia* executive orders, presidential messages, hearings on proposals, executive orders, and amicus briefs.

PET was developed as a response to the limitations of both the rational and the incremental models of policymaking. Its essence is a trope inspired by the natural sciences (paleontology), which provides an explanatory framework on which to ground empirical observations (Howlett & Migone, 2011; Prindle, 2012). In order to rid the framework from the pitfalls of the metaphor, Prindle (2012) suggests renaming it "punctuated incrementalism"; indeed Howlett and Migone (2011) find incrementalism to be very much a salient component of PET. There is a binary quality in Punctuated Equilibrium as its space is occupied by either incrementally occurring change or bursts. Breunig and Koski (2012) explore both in an attempt to extend PET to state-level decision-making processes. In investigating distributions of state budgets from 1984 to 2009, they find that budget categories that received consistent attention are more likely to show incremental changes, whereas those that are more punctuated show smaller growth in the long run. At the congressional level, Wolfe (2012) similarly finds that media attention contributes to stability and slows down policy-making.

Though theorization and original empirical testing of PET was rooted in American politics, it is increasingly being applied beyond the United States. John and Bevan (2012) create a three-point typology of punctuation comprising procedural changes, high and low salience punctuations using the case of the UK from 1911 to 2008, whereas Alexandrova, Carammia, and Timmermans (2012) confirm that PET applies to the agenda of the European Council. Jensen (2011) integrates it into the Danish setting by exploring how party competition informs the impact of attention shifts that lead to punctuations.

Innovation and Policy Diffusion

Innovation and policy diffusion research focuses on the processes through which a government adopts innovative (new to this particular government) policies. Diffusion literature recognizes that different policy jurisdictions do not exist in a vacuum but instead are influenced by the choices of other jurisdictions. Three main tenets undergird diffusion: first, governmental jurisdictions learn from each other and from policies and programs implemented elsewhere. Second, they compete with each other in adopting policies to gain an economic advantage or avoid being disadvantaged compared to other governmental jurisdictions. Finally, if all these jurisdictions are part of a national context, there is pressure on all of them to conform to national standards (Berry & Berry, 2007). Rather than a single theory, diffusion comprises a set of theories of government innovation sharing common features with theories seeking to explain innovative behavior in individuals as well as organiza-

tional innovation (Berry & Berry, 2007). The related but distinct body of literature on policy transfer is not taken up in this review.

Building on Berry and Berry (2007), Shipan and Volden (2012) identify several points regarding diffusion, salient to both scholars and practitioners. In addition to the claim that governments compete as well as learn from one another, the authors recognize that diffusion is a function of more than geographical proximity, that policy diffusion is not always a good thing, that decentralization is crucial, that politics and government capabilities matter, and that policy diffusion is contingent on the nature of policies. Recent papers have focused on intergovernmental competition, policy attributes, and government capabilities.

Assuming a polycentric environment, the question is not *whether* policies diffuse through intergovernmental competition, but *why*. Drawing from Tiebout's (1956) idea that people vote with their feet, Baybeck, Berry, and Siegel (2011) go beyond the idea that policies from one state spill over to neighboring states because the latter assume a defensive posture (i.e., engage in a "race to the bottom" in welfare policies to avoid attracting low-income people) by constructing a spatially explicit, strategic theory of diffusion. This allows for the conceptualization of a more sophisticated, proactive, and aggressive state competition aiming at attracting "the right kind" of resident.

Interestingly, the intergovernmental competition argument can be turned on its head—policies with measures not easily observable and not likely to diffuse among governmental entities with a high degree of competitiveness (van der Heiden & Strebel, 2012). This leads to an important point in policy diffusion literature, the idea that *what* gets diffused matters. In other words, policy attributes are important when it comes to their adoption by other governmental jurisdictions. Drawing from earlier work by Rogers (2004), Makse and Volden (2011) explore the following five attributes in criminal justice policy in the United States: "relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, observability and trialability" (p. 110). They find that policies diffuse in expected ways contingent to these attributes; "policies with high relative advantages, high compatibility, low complexity, high observability, and high trialability all spread across the states at a higher rate" (p. 122).

Similar are the findings by Taylor, Lewis, Jacobsmeier, and Shapiro (2012) who argue that the dynamics of diffusion are contingent upon the contents of the policy at hand. In investigating gay rights policies, they call for special focus to individual components of complex policies, since they find inconsistencies in their rate of adoption. For example, educational components concerning LGBT education were less adopted than health insurance components, highlighting the need for disaggregated policy analysis. The research of a different kind of morality politics (stem cell research) further reveals that national government intervention during the agenda-setting process can increase the salience of the policy at hand, even if the controversy at the national level remains unresolved (Karch, 2012).

Policy venues and their interaction with policy images are explored by Boushey (2012), who sets forth a new theoretical perspective about diffusion based on ecological models. Theoretically, he fuses research from punctuated equilibrium to address the time component of diffusion and to explain processes leading to "punc-

tuated diffusion dynamics." Methodologically, he draws from management science; using Bass's (1969) mixed influence diffusion parameters, Boushey does a comparative analysis of internal and external influences in 81 policies that have spread across the United States. He finds that "[t]he considerable variation in the speed and scope of diffusion can be explained by the disproportionate allocation of political attention across policy making institutions in federalism" (p. 142). What is more, when issues which are normally the states' prerogative move to the national arena, policy diffusion can take place very rapidly due to federal mandates (Boushey, 2012).

Regardless of the attributes of the policy being diffused, the assumption is, as mentioned earlier, that it is new to the administrative entity at hand—an innovation. Two recent articles investigate the diffusion of innovations, one from a governmental capabilities angle and the second by examining the privatization of government services. More specifically, Bhatti, Olsen, and Pedersen (2011) find that a high concentration of administrative professionals increases the possibility of adoption of innovation as evidenced in the case of Danish Citizen Service Centers (CSC). Additionally, the authors find that municipalities emulate their neighbors and that the more affluent the municipality the higher the adoption rate. Evidence also suggests that the greater the need for an innovation, the greater the possibility for its adoption, but not that the size of a municipality or ideology play any role.

Innovation as an idea is often associated with market competition. Bouché and Volden (2011) compare privatized and government-provided foster care services. They find that there is innovation in both instances, but in different ways; the innovation engendered in the private sector by market competition is counterbalanced by learning across governmental jurisdictions. Additionally, the authors shed light on the fact that a mix of public-private arrangements seems to bring about more innovativeness than any system wholly private or wholly public.

Multiple Streams and the Evolution of Policy Entrepreneurship

Developed by Kingdon (1984) and synthesized by Zahariadis (2007), Multiple Streams (MS) is based on the garbage-can logic of Cohen, March and Olsen (1972). It seeks to "[explain] how policies are made by national governments under conditions of ambiguity" (Zahariadis, 2007, p. 65). The "lens" as it is mostly referred to by Zahariadis (2007), has five structural components: three distinct streams: policy, problems, and politics; policy entrepreneurs; and policy windows. MS theorizes that policy change occurs when policy entrepreneurs couple the streams during short-lived, propitious moments in time—policy windows.

MS has mostly been applied to U.S. policy making (though see Khayesi & Amekudzi [2011] for an application in Brazil). A recent article by Ackrill and Kay (2011) addresses points perceived to have been theoretically underdeveloped when MS was applied to European policymaking. The authors' departure point is the structure of the Commission, which consists of thematically arranged Directorate Generals (DGs), in the sense that each DG oversees a particular policy area. Ackrill and Kay (2011) argue that ambiguity in the EU context is institutional ambiguity that is, a policymaking environment comprising overlapping institutions lacking a clear

institutional hierarchy. This overlap is conducive to spillovers; even though each DG is responsive for a policy area, policy issues spread across areas and thus across institutional arrangements, DGs in this case. In such an environment the role of policy entrepreneurs goes beyond the traditional role of the "coupler" (Kingdon, 1984), because "skillful entrepreneurs may use endogenous spillover effects to further a certain agenda of policy proposal elsewhere" (Ackrill & Kay, 2011, p. 76). An additional innovative contribution of this article regarding the theorizing of policy entrepreneurs (PEs) is that it explicitly considers them to not only be selling solutions, but also as actors having the power to implement them.[5] The concept of policy entrepreneurs enables MS to explore the role of ideas—which policy entrepreneurs advance—in policymaking without altogether discounting the role of self-interest, which is part of the policy entrepreneurs' calculus. There has been an explosion in interest in policy entrepreneurship, which has resulted in substantial advances in literature.

The policy entrepreneur emerged as a complementary component of broader theories of policy change including the ones reviewed in this article (Mintrom & Norman, 2009). PE has suffered from conceptual imprecision because the term "entrepreneur" has traveled across disciplines, because it has been used with many modifiers (policy, public, political etc.), and also because PE is as much about the individual actor (entrepreneur) as it is for the process (entrepreneurship). Christopoulos and Ingold (2011) attempt to pinpoint the conceptual differences between a political broker and a political entrepreneur based on the interactions each has with its network based on the hypothesis that brokers promote overall stability whereas entrepreneurs focus on policy outputs.

In most research PE is treated as the independent variable, which means the focus is on its explanatory role in policy change. However, Blavoukos and Bourantonis (2011) explore the structural features affecting the entrepreneurial potential of Chairs in multilateral negotiations in international settings such as the UN, EU, and the WTO. The authors find that the political entrepreneurs perform a cost-benefit analysis based on the mandate and the resources they have, as well as constraints placed upon them.

Two recent articles examine policy entrepreneurship in England and the Netherlands. At the subnational level, Oborn, Barrett, and Exworthy (2011) investigate the role of the individual expert actor in London heath-care reform. Highlighting the importance of individual agency, the authors find that the dominant entrepreneur forges alliance between actors and policy communities and works with other actors in multiple levels. One important finding is that though in PE research tends to focus on the individual, entrepreneurial actions are carried out by teams and not just one heroic, lonely individual.

Strategies are the focus of Brouwer and Biermann (2011). How do policy entrepreneurs manage commons resources? Brouwer and Biermann (2011) identify four types of strategies in their research of Dutch water management: attention and support seeking strategies, linking strategies, relational management strategies, and arena (venue) strategies. They argue that use of these strategies by policy entrepreneurs at the right timing could influence the development of policy streams. But

what happens when policy entrepreneurs fail? Hays (2012) outlines Reagan's failure to establish school prayer in the United States. Reagan created the Office of Legal Policy and the Committee on Federal Judicial Selection, which prioritized philosophical and ideological issues in the selection of Supreme Court judges ensuring the appointment of conservative judges. He also established a political deputy in the Office of the Solicitor General thus ensuring "greater advocacy before the Supreme Court" (Hays, 2012, p. 412). The author argues that despite these innovations, the legal system proved too resilient and Reagan's intended change did not pass.

Evolving Trends[6]

The following articles represent evolving trends in the literature. I use "evolving" instead of "emergent" because these theories have been developing by teams of researchers for some time. Institutional Grammar is a methodological tool based on IAD, but versatile enough to be used as an independent method. A drawback of both Institutional Grammar and the Narrative Policy Framework is that the methodological work is time and labor intensive and requires the reconciliation of the work of more than one coder. The Collective Learning Framework and the Policy Regimes Perspective draw on extensive literature to conceptually sharpen policy learning and policy regimes, respectively. Finally, the Robustness Framework, the Institutional Collective Action Framework, and The Ecology of Games Framework all deal—in different ways—with complexity and uncertainty in governance.

Institutional Grammar

In order to better understand action situations, Crawford and E. Ostrom (1995) devised an institutional grammar, which "provides the means to partition the content of regulation into single statements or directives and then, to identify the major constitutive components of these statements" (Siddiki, Basurto, & Weible, 2012, p. 168). Institutional grammar was revised by Basurto, Kingsley, McQueen, Smith, and Weible (2010) and is the focus of two recent articles. Siddiki, Weible, Basurto, and Calanni (2011) revise the institutional grammar tool (IGT) to include an additional coding component, the oBject. This addition helps separate the action (aIm) from its receiver (oBject). Additionally, in statements where there are two animate actors, oBject can differentiate the one who is doing the action from the one to whom the action is directed. Siddiki et al. (2011) also revise the guidelines for applying the institutional grammar tool and they apply this modified tool to four Colorado State Aquaculture policies. In a later article, Siddiki et al. (2012) test the modified grammar tool further using the same four Colorado State Aquaculture policies seeking to understand regulatory compliance. They find that levels of compliance vary across the interviewees and also within the same interviewee. Additional findings include that compliance levels are influenced by the actors' perceptions of the appropriateness of regulations, feelings of guilt, and feelings of social disapproval (Siddiki et al., 2012). An important statement by Siddiki et al. (2011) regarding the versatility of the IGT was that even though the logic behind it

stemmed from the IAD framework, as it is developed in its present form it is a methodological tool and could be utilized in conjunction with other policy process frameworks and theories, such as ACF.

Narrative Policy Framework

The Narrative Policy Framework is an evolving theory of the policy process investigating the empirical role of policy narratives in the policy process and whether policy narratives influence policy outcomes.

Policy narratives are strategic stories with a plot, villains and good guys, and a moral lesson (Jones & McBeth, 2010; Shanahan, McBeth, & Hathaway, 2011). They can also include adjuvant components such as a plot and a causal mechanism (CM), and narrative strategies, such as the distributions of costs and benefits and policy beliefs (Shanahan, Jones, McBeth, & Lane, 2013). The framework operates at the micro-, meso-, and macro- levels and has three main assumptions: first, it recognizes the centrality of policy narratives on policy processes, especially in light of new media; second, a broad set of actors generate policy narratives; and third, "policies and programs are translations of beliefs that are communicated through policy narratives, the vehicle for conveying and organizing policy information" (Shanahan, Jones, & McBeth, 2011, p. 540). Though the theoretical underpinnings of NPF are interdisciplinary and draw heavily from post positivists like Debra Stone as well as social construction theory, Shanahan, McBeth and Hathaway (2011) move the construct of policy narratives away from post-positivistic research—methodologically speaking—in asking whether policy narratives influence public opinion. They conduct a quantitative study using a quasi-experimental design, the findings of which suggest the following: first, policy narratives can reinforce and galvanize existing opinions held by coalition members, and second, policy narratives have enough influence to convert people who previously held divergent opinions.

ACF has also influenced the architecture of NPF and the two frameworks are most congruent at the meso level, though NPF addressed the lack of attention in "the politics of constructing public policy" evidenced in the established theories of policy process (Shanahan et al., 2013, p. 455). The beliefs that glue advocacy coalitions together are embedded in policy narratives (Shanahan, McBeth et al., 2011); what is more, NPF can identify ways to measure the role of endogenous and exogenous public opinion on the structure of these policy narratives.

In further developing the framework at the meso level, Shanahan et al. (2013) investigate the importance of the devil shift—and its opposite narrative strategy, the angel shift—in the case study of a proposed wind farm off the coast of Nantucket. The authors set out to investigate inter—as well as intra—coalition differences in the use of narrative elements, narrative strategies, and policy beliefs. They find significant intercoalitional differences between the narrative elements of the competing policy narratives. Additionally, they found that the winning side used the angel shift as part of an overall winning policy narrative with prevalent solutions. Whether this was a psychological effect or a purposive strategy was not clear, and the authors identify this issue as an avenue for further research.

The Collective Learning Framework

In two recent articles, Gerlak and Heikkila (2011) and Heikkila and Gerlak (2013) build a conceptual approach to define and understand learning at the collective level, a concept which remains fuzzy despite the amount of literature devoted to it. First, Gerlak and Heikkila (2011) used the extreme case of the Everglades restoration program to define the different aspects of learning in policy making and unpack the factors which inform it. Their 2013 work refines this approach. Heikkila and Gerlak (2013) address three main challenges: first, they define and distinguish between the process of learning and the products of learning; second, they investigate the differences between individual and group learning; and third, they identify factors fostering or inhibiting learning.

The authors recognize that the internal characteristics of a collective environment, namely the institutional structure, social dynamics, and the technological and functional domain (all influenced by rules and norms) in conjunction with individual learning and exogenous factors (political, economic, and social changes) influence the collective learning process. This process consists of acquiring, translating and disseminating information and leads to cognitive and/or behavioral learning products. A decentralized, flat structure with open social dynamics featuring trust would be more conducive to learning than a centralized structure with social dynamics characterized by suspicion, for example. However, learning in the policy environment is not a linear process, it does not automatically lead to change and even if it does, it does not mean that change is good. This is a conceptual framework; Heikkila and Gerlak (2013) call for more work refining operationalization and developing tools to measure change.

Beyond Subsystems: Policy Regimes

The regimes approach centers on the interplay between policies and politics (May & Jochim, 2013) rather than being a tool aimed at measuring (policy) change. Moving beyond subsystems, policy regimes are conceptualized as "the governing arrangements for addressing policy problems" and may include "institutional arrangements, interest alignments, and shared ideas" (May & Jochim, 2013, p. 428). Ideas are the glue that holds the regimes together, much like beliefs are the glue of subsystems. The policy regimes perspective starts with the policy problem; as a descriptive lens it works backwards to map the governing arrangements for addressing this problem. As an analytical lens, the policy regimes proposes that the stronger the regime, the greater the levels of policy legitimacy, coherence, and durability.

May, Jochim, and Sapotichne (2011) find that the homeland security policy regime is weak, contributing to policy uncertainties and instability. Strength in boundary spanning (ones crossing traditional subsystems) regimes like this one is desired, but it has to be noted that strength does not mean "good" policy in normative terms, just like policy change is not always "good."

Worsham and Stores (2012) illustrate the flexibility of boundary-spanning regimes. Drawing from PET, subsystem theory, and the policy regimes approach, they explain the elasticity of the subsystem and its ability to absorb demands giving the appearance of stability by investigating how the agriculture policy subsystem in the United States had been able to resist the civil rights policy regime and effectively discriminate against African American farmers.

Finally it has to be noted that the regimes perspective requires authoritative (governmental) action and is not an appropriate tool to analyze private governing arrangements. What is more, at this time it is used in the American policy environment and more work is needed to advance methodological aspects of the framework.

Robustness of Social-Ecological Systems

Anderies and Janssen (2013) ask how we can reconcile a policy process mostly understood as fairly stable and static over time with constructs such as globalization, fluidity, lack of fixity over time and space, and complexity of systems. They argue that current policy contexts, especially ones related to environmental and common pool resource (CPR) problems, change far too rapidly. To accommodate this flux, they develop the Robustness of Social-Ecological Systems. This framework builds on IAD premises and moves SES forward by focusing on the understanding of fundamental feedback mechanisms that promote the robustness of a system, thus allowing it to be flexible in order to withstand uncertainty and change. An SES is more robust when there is a good "fit" between institutional arrangements and ecological dynamics. This makes the translation of legal rules to rules-in-use more efficient and alleviates monitoring problems. What is more, comparative analyses of systems reveal that redundancy of regulatory mechanisms, modularity of a system, and diversity in agents and connections (all understood in a polycentric governing arrangement) promotes robustness. Such scalability and flatness promotes that idea of policy experimentation—policies can be tried first in a simpler system and if they succeed can be adopted by a more complex one. What is more, a key lesson from this framework is that much like when striving for sustainability, there are always trade-offs; a system cannot be robust in its entirety and making policies to increase robustness implies that a decision be made about which vulnerabilities to address in the short or long term.

Institutional Collective Action Framework

Why do overlapping jurisdictions choose (or not) to cooperate and what does that mean for the efficient provision of public goods? The Institutional Collective Action framework (ICA) draws heavily from collective action literature and from a variety of theoretical backgrounds to address the externalities of choice in fragmented and overlapping jurisdictions. Without mechanisms facilitating cooperation, local actors will act with their short-term interest in mind and these decisions will be collectively inefficient. Feiock (2013) maps the relationship between dilem-

mas of collective institutional action with the mechanisms that mitigate those dilemmas and provides a taxonomy of collaborative mechanisms on a scale of how formally they are structured—socially embedded, contracts, delegated authority—and in terms of the their institutional scope—bilateral, multilateral, collective. Transaction cost related to entering and exiting collective arrangements are higher when participation is mandated by a governmental authority and lowest when participation is voluntary. At the same time, the more encompassing and authoritative the collaborative mechanism, the more effective it is; ICA argues that "participation incentives are determined by the net expected benefits from the mechanism" (Feiock, 2013, p. 408). Recent empirical work in American and international settings (see for example Andersen & Pierre, 2010; Park, 2012; Tavares & Camões, 2007) has demonstrated the versatility of the framework including work on the non-profit and volunteer sectors.

Ecology of Games Framework

Lubell (2013) addresses complexity by tackling more than one policy game (venue) at the same time. Drawing from Long's (1958) "ecology of games" concept, Lubell presents a cumulative, synthetic, hybrid theory extending IAD and LPE and more broadly the idea of polycentric governance. The Ecology of Games framework (EG) contributes to the concept of polycentric governance by producing testable hypotheses, by analyzing the causal mechanisms of institutional change, and by taking a systems view in the understanding of how different institutional arrangements link to policy outcomes. Similar to ICA, Lubell addresses fragmentation in governance and externalities imposed on one entity by decisions made by another. Lubell (2013) highlights the positive aspects of this fragmentation by noting that it creates "an evolutionary niche" (p. 547) in which institutions can take advantage of positive externalities and ameliorate the negative ones.

Conclusions

This article reviewed research relating to established theories of policy process largely published in 2011 and 2012. It included new theories published in 2013. The reviewed literature suggests that the established theories of the policy process continue to generate scholarship moving these theories forward at times by synthesizing them. It also suggests that the structure of these theories allow for theoretical and methodological extensions. Finally, most of the trends evolving into new theories have their intellectual roots in the established theories and are the product of teamwork.

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Notes

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1. Here the terms are used largely interchangeable, notwithstanding the conceptual differences among them.
2. I included the 2013 PSJ special issue outlining six new theories of the policy process because of its timing and subject matter even though technically speaking it was outside the time frame of the review.
3. I included a report from a research institute because I judged it to be an interesting application.
4. Pierce touches on social construction theory, but this article is mainly a study of ACF.
5. In the economic literature, McCaffrey and Salerno (2011) argue for an ideal type of political entrepreneur who owns the resources instead of mobilizing them; that is, possesses all decision-making authority.
6. Note that this is not an exclusive list of evolving trends in the literature.

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