

# THE STUDY OF POLICY

by

FRANK BONILLA

## Introduction

The study of policy, or organizational decision-making, has drawn the attention of increasing numbers of American social scientists during the past twenty years. This interest has grown, to a large extent, from a practical concern with social planning and the demand from both government and business for methods of evaluating in advance the consequences of alternative policies and for measuring the effectiveness of policies already in operation. Another source of interest in policy-making has been that of public administrators and management specialists who have sought to discover the formal, internal structures that make for optimum flow of command and communication within given organizations. Students of the political process have attempted to trace the relative influence on national policy of voter interest, organized pressure groups, the structure of legislative and executive machinery, and the myriad other elements that seem to affect the fortunes of decisions bearing on the nation as a whole. A voluminous literature on leadership and the characteristics and functions of elite groups in different societies and social movements already exists (1). Least attention seems to have been given to the clear conceptualization of policy as a social phenomenon distinct from other kinds of decision-making and to narrowing down those characteristics that set it off from related activities.

---

1. Note especially the studies of the Hoover Institute and Library on War, Revolution and Peace published by Stanford University Press, Series B: Elite Studies.

The fact that in the elaboration of decision-making structures the main functions tend to be kept within the framework of face-to-face groups has meant that the study of problem solving and decision-making in small groups has not infrequently been confused or equated with the study of policy-making in larger social systems. When this problem is faced and policy is looked at in the larger context, the result has been generally a tendency to treat each research as a discrete case history resulting in a discursive, anecdotal treatment of materials with little opportunity for any cumulative integration of research findings<sup>(2)</sup>.

This paper will seek to arrive at a precise definition of policy, to describe some of its distinctive characteristics, and to take a few tentative steps toward examining the problem of policy formation and enforcement within the action frame of reference.

#### Policy - A Definition

The first distinction to be made is that while processes and phenomena analogous to policy and policy-making may be observed at the level of personality and certain small groups, (eg. habits, attitudes, values, traits), policy-making is an activity distinctive of larger social systems -- that is, of enduring social organizations involved in a complex cooperative process. In face-to-face groups, planning for action is generally carried out in a setting in which information, suggestions for action, and the bases for choice among alternatives are more or less simultaneously communicated to all participants; decisions are arrived at by consensus or with the implicit consent and acceptance of members of the group. There are no problems of policy

---

2. An attempt to break out of this pattern are the studies of the Foreign Policy Analysis Project at Princeton. An interaction model for the study of relationships between national states is presented in Snyder, R.C., H. Bruck, and B. Sabin. Decision-Making As an Approach to the Study of International Politics, FPAS #3, Organizational Behavior Section, Princeton University, June 1954.

until there is the differentiation by reason of technical competence, allocation of time and resources, or on some other basis of a distinct person or group responsible for making decisions and prescribing rules for the larger group. Policy, then, appears only when the complexity of the joint task requires the cooperation of large numbers of people with related but differentiated functions, and the need for formal mechanisms of coordination emerges. That this specialization of command functions is the essence of organization has long been recognized by students of organizational structure (3).

The second principal distinction to be made is that policy is always conscious and explicit; it is based on some rational connection made between a proposed action and a desired end (4). Decisions are the result of deliberation and calculation. There is a conscious presence of the end to be accomplished and the means to be used. Thus policies are rules and prescriptions formulated according to some standard of rationality. This is not to say that such decisions are based on evidence that would satisfy scientific canons of proof. But under ideal conditions decisions and the rationale behind them are known to, and can be verbalized by, every member of the group for whom the

---

3. See Barnard, Chester, The Functions of the Executive, Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 1938, p.210.

4. Refer to page (of this paper) for some comment on non-rational elements in policy-making. Charismatic leadership as discussed by Weber and other writers is not characteristic of enduring action organizations as the chief basis of authority. Hoffer notes: "A movement is pioneered by men of words, materialized by fanatics, and consolidated by men of action. It is usually an advantage to a movement, and perhaps a prerequisite for its endurance, that these roles should be played by different men succeeding each other as conditions require. When the same person or persons (or the same type of person) leads a movement from inception to maturity, it usually ends in disaster. ...The genuine man of action is not a man of faith but a man of law". Hoffer, Eric, The True Believer, New York: Harper, 1951, pp. 146-151.

particular rule is relevant. The proposed rules must pass from the consciousness of the policy-maker to that of those whose actions he would control in order to be effective (5). There is here a dual responsibility: policy-makers are expected to disseminate as efficiently as possible their decisions while the rank and file are also expected to make an effort to become and stay informed about the rules and successive changes in them. Ignorance of the law is not often an acceptable excuse for failure to comply. It should be noted that this placing of policy on the conscious level means that policy is less general and more variable than value orientations, attitudes, sentiments, or similar concepts, but is at a higher level of generalization than ad hoc problem solving or decision-making.

Since policy is rational and explicit, the demand for conformity is more likely to be a demand to fulfill "the letter" rather than the "spirit" of the rules laid down as may be the case with regard to more generalized value-orientations or attitudes. It is true that major policy decisions must be cast in such general terms as to fit a wide range of possible eventualities, but policy is most effective where re-interpretation and specification of directions accompanies the process of dissemination down the chain of command, when there is relatively little ambiguity for the individual about what he has to do to make a given policy effective. Moreover, while policy of long standing may pass into the realm of values, and policy is always made within the framework of the larger value system, policy as such would seldom become

- 
5. There are obvious limitations in this regard in very large or complex groups with a massive output of discrete directions to extremely specialized components. In such a situation those with extremely specialized functions may get only a very marginal idea of the over-all policy of the organization from the detailed instructions that filter down, or may receive instructions or perceive policy in such general terms that they will find it difficult to guide their own conduct in specific situations.

an internalized need-disposition or orientation to action in the sense that values and other acquired social motives become integrated into the personality structures of individuals. Nevertheless, it is expected that legitimate policy decisions will be accepted and enforced by all members of the system or by its enforcing agent. The idea that ~~xxx~~ authority rests on the acceptance by individuals of direction from command or decision-making center of the organization is expressed by both Barnard and Weber (6).

In summary, policy-making is in essence the formulation of rules to guide behavior in given contingencies. It is a <sup>①</sup> characteristic activity of complex, corporate, action-oriented organizations. Policy is always <sup>②</sup> rational, (albeit rarely scientific), conscious and explicit, and it is expected that <sup>③</sup> the total social system, or its enforcing agents, will accept and enforce policy decisions. These three fundamental qualities set off policy as a unique social phenomenon for study and analysis. A number of additional characteristics frequently associated with policy and its making, but less fundamental in identifying what policy is, will now be discussed briefly.

\* 1. Policy decisions are usually made at the higher schalons of the formal organization. This is another way of saying that the formal command and coordination functions carry with them prestige and status within the organization. However, there is an informal network <sup>④</sup> of power and influence lying within the formal structure of authority. The nature of authority has already been discussed above. In the sense it is used here -- being essentially the acceptance of a communication by group members as governing their action in a given situation -- autho-

---

6. Barnard, op.cit., p.163; Weber, op.cit., p.146.

rity is distinguishable from power and influence in /only one respect (7). Authority always implies responsibility -- that is, a mutually understood and reciprocal set of rights and duties within a definitely organized system. This element of structural stability is not intrinsically a part of relationships based on power or influence. Influence, particularly, tends to operate outside the formally established channels of communication in the organization. Authority, power, and influence are all ways in which the behavior of members of the group is controlled. But, while authority is generally monopolized by those occupying particular positions in the formal organization, power and influence exist not only as adjuncts to authority but may also be exercised by those without formal rights in the decision-making process to affect decisions at upper echelons and to abet or disrupt acceptance and enforcement of policy at lower levels.

∨ 2. The decision-making situation is repetitive. The individual or group assigned the command functions is called upon to make decisions of policy over a period of time. This immediately suggests variation in performance related to length of tenure, the volume of decision output required by the organization, and the methods used for recruitment

---

7. These terms (especially authority and power), have been used almost interchangeably. The general tendency has been to speak of authority as legitimate power while regarding "naked" power as more coercive and less restricted by consideration of individual preferences or rights in the making of choices. Stanton and Schwartz speak of power as the making of decisions which will be enforced (Stanton, A.H., & Schwartz, M. S., The Mental Hospital, New York: Basic Books, 1954, Chap. XII.) Karl Deutsch speaks of power as the priority of output over intake, the ability to talk instead of listening. In a sense, he says that it is the ability not to learn. (Deutsch, Karl W., "Communication Theory and social science", Amer. J. Orthopsychiat., 1952, 22, 469-483.) This is an interesting definition considered in the light of Bales' findings regarding the distribution of status in small discussion groups. (Parsons, T., Bales, R.F., & Shils, E., Working Papers in the Theory of Action, Glencoe, Ill.,: The Free Press, 1953, Chap.IV.)

or replacement of personnel in the decision-making apparatus. The last of these problems is an area of study in itself<sup>(8)</sup>. The cumulative experience in policy building acquired through time and the shifting exigencies of situational and organizational demands means that eventually certain routine patterns emerge in the handling of situations requiring policy pronouncements. These patterns govern primarily the interrelationships among those formally within the "administrative staff" or command-issuing sub-system but may include routine recognition or deference to power blocs or influentials outside the constituted machinery of decision. There is in effect a body of "policy about policy" as well as habits, attitudes, and value-orientations related to policy that are distinctive for the coordinating elite. These may be shared to a greater or lesser extent with the rank and file; but seldom coincide completely with the notions the rank and file have about how policy is or ought to be made.

\* 3. Policy decisions are public. It has been noted that authority always implies responsibility. One of the ways in which responsibility is fixed is that the decision-maker's identity is generally known publicly -- or at least that some person or group of persons assumes responsibility before the public for the policy formulated. The power or influence wielder who chooses to operate anonymously from behind the scenes is seeking to control the actions of others while evading the accountability and public attention that accompany authority. Thus, while it may be readily conceivable that the actual wielder of power may remain unknown within a complex organization, there can be no organization without the explicit, and therefore public, assumption of

---

8. An extensive bibliography of the literature on the formation of elites and changes in their personnel may be found in Lasswell, H. D., Lerner, D., & Rothwell, C.E., \*The Comparative Study of Elites, Stanford, California: Standord University Press, 1952, p.52.

command functions by some individual or group. Policy decisions are also public in another sense. From the point of view of the policy-maker they are public perhaps not so much in that his own part in them is generally known but in that they affect large numbers of people both within his own organization and outside it. A great deal of the day's international tensions may be attributed to the fact that practically any policy decision of importance made by the United States or the Soviet Union carries with it grave consequences for the other nations of the world. In terms of traditional concepts of national sovereignty these nations have no right to seek to make their voices heard in the councils of American policy makers despite the direct implications for their own survival of American choices.

\* 4. The policy-maker is always faced with a limited number of alternatives. The limitations on the policy-maker's activity derive from many sources. His function is by definition the formulation of purpose and the coordination of organizational action to achieve the objectives for which the organization exists. Since these objectives are ordinarily related to the control and manipulation of elements external to the organization, there are immediate limitations established by this external situation. These external elements include general environmental conditions and material objects, as well as persons and other organizations all of which may or may not be susceptible to some control and which in some cases may be actively at cross purposes with the organization concerned. Evaluating information about these external situational elements and devising ways of dealing with them effectively is the principal task of the policy-maker. This means that he must be responsive to changes in the external situation, have a



readiness to adapt and shift purpose, and be imaginative in contriving alternative means when conventional approaches prove ineffectual.

But enduring and complex organizations and their individual members have a tendency to build up resistances to sudden and rapid change, especially if this change involves wholesale revision of what have been regarded as important goals or the adoption of methods that have been traditionally disprized. In general, the more radical the departure from tradition and the shorter the time span allowed for the assimilation of new interpretations reflected in policy changes, the greater the internal strain on the organization is likely to be. Thus, the policy-maker must always take into account the sources and the degree of resistance he may expect to encounter within his own ranks as the aftermath of a given decision and estimate the possible effects of individual alienation or disaffection on the continued functioning of the group. It may at times be necessary to put off action until the level of commitment internally has been adjusted to meet the anticipated strain. Barnard points out four essential characteristics of an authoritative communication (one that will be obeyed). Such a communication must be understood; it must be seen as consistent with organizational aims; it must be seen as generally consistent with the personal aims of group members; and those affected by the order must be physically and mentally able to comply (9).

The first of these privisos underscores again the ~~point~~ point made earlier that effective policy rests on effective communication. This is a further limitation on the policy-maker and another of his principal preoccupations. "In most organizations, the maintenance of the stated -- and presumably optimum -- patterns of communication is

regarded as the first principle of effective performance" (10). The resilience or "capacity to learn" of an organization depends to a great extent not only on keeping communication flowing freely but also on the capacity to assimilate and process new facts and the speed with which new interpretations are translated into coordinated action. It is possible to speak ~~from~~ from this point of view of such concepts as organizational "consciousness" and "will" and to begin to define them in quantifiable terms (11).

Thus there are constraints on the policy-maker from the external situation, from the need to stimulate coordinated effort internally, and from the need to assimilate and process intelligence about the changing external situation and the internal state of the organization. The alternatives open to the policy-maker are also limited by the resources in material and work potential at the command of the organization, and lastly by the need to allocate his own time and that of those whose action he must direct.

This brief discussion only begins to point up the complexity of the problems facing policy-makers and anyone who would understand how policy is made. These problems will be considered again when policy-making as a process is explored. It should be noted that although we

- 
10. Bavelas, Alex, "Communications patterns in task-oriented groups", in Lerner, D. (Ed.), The Policy Sciences.
  11. Deutsch, Karl W., Nationalism and Social Communication, New York: The Technology Press, & John Wiley & Sons, 1953. Says Deutsch: "Any sane individual has vastly greater speed, range of recall from memory and power of recombination than any organization or group. Groups have longer memories and greater facilities for storage ~~of~~ through writing, tradition, institutions and the like. But although groups can gather and store vastly more information than individuals they are far more clumsy in handling the more ample data they possess. Compared to the lightning thoughts or feelings of an individual, any group such as a nation, has in this respect far less than the mental powers of a cat"., pp. 145-146.

have spoken here of the "policy-maker", the general points which have been made are valid whether the term refers to a single individual or a corps of decision-makers.

\* 5. There is often ambiguity about the bases on which policy decisions should be made. Ambiguities arise not only in the minds of those formally engaged in making policy, but also in the minds of those who try to influence them or are themselves bound by the decisions made. Competing role obligations and expectations make their weight felt even when the situation is fairly unequivocally defined as one to be handled with universalistic, impersonal, and affectively neutral standards. Loyalty to the values of the larger society in which the organization may be operating, ties of affect to family and friends, dedication to professional ethics or ideals, pressures from power wielders or influentials in and outside the organization, as well as more idiosyncratic personal needs, may all impinge on the policy-maker's performance in some way. When they do, there is likely to be some rationalization or attempt to legitimate the claim to attention of a particular set of pressures. Where such a maneuver is successful, it often lends to the entrenchment of special interest which are not necessarily coincidental with those of the organization as a whole.

\* 6. There is usually disagreement and doubt about the consequences of any policy decision. This disagreement and doubt may exist at all levels of the organization and is based not alone on differential distribution of information or technical competence to make judgments, nor on variations in dominant value-orientations, nor on conflicts of individual or sub-collectivity motives or goals with those of the organization as a whole. Even assuming that all of these disparate sources of

diversity of opinion and uncertainty could be equilibrated or held in check, there remains an element of unpredicatability in the planning of human affairs which makes it extremely unlikely that complete unanimity about the consequences of a decision of policy that affects large numbers of people will be achieved among all those persons concerned.

\* 7. The motives of the policy-maker as well as those who influence him are not always rational or explicit. In defining policy initially, it was stated that policy is always rational, explicit, and, therefore, communicable. However, the policy-maker is not always competent to explain how and for what reasons he arrived at a particular decision. At least he is very likely to omit in his recapitulation certain elements that seem crucial to the scientific observer and to misrepresent the importance of others. Again Barnard provides a pertinent comment: "Involved in acts which are ascribed to decision are many subsidiary acts which are themselves automatic, the processes of which are usually unknown to the actor" (12).

#### Policy-Making as a System of Action

The preceding pages offer a fairly precise definition of policy. A number of the characteristics of policy and some factors that enter into its elaboration and enforcement have also been described. This definition and list of characteristics immediately call to mind a long roster of variables that must be taken into account in any analysis of policy-making. Rather than undertake an exhaustive listing of these elements here, an attempt will be made to work out some preliminary steps toward the application of the action frame of reference as set forth by

---

12. Barnard, op.cit., p.185. This comment is made immediately after speaking of decision as the result of deliberation, calculation and reasoning. Refer also to Cardozo, Benjamin, The Nature of the Judicial Process, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952, p.167ff.

Talcott Parsons and his collaborators to the study of policy. It is hoped in this way to bring the study of policy under the umbrage of a broad and systematic analytical scheme (which appears an urgent need) and at the same time to suggest the usefulness of this broad framework for the analysis of a narrower range of problems within social systems.

xThe Functions of Policy-Making Systems

As a first step, the fundamental parallelism between the essential functions of command and the generalized exigencies facing any social system may be sketched briefly. These general system problems, or phases, may be roughly stated as/ a)<sup>①</sup> the adjustment to scarce and uncertain opportunities for goal gratification; b)<sup>②</sup> adaptation to situational elements; c)<sup>③</sup> the integration of system sub-units; and d)<sup>④</sup> the management of the integrity of value patterns, including the management of motivational tensions that tend to disrupt these patterns (13).

Barnard, working independently some years before the elaboration of these system problems by Parsons and his colleagues, discriminated four principal functions of command and coordination ~~xxx~~ within an organization can be readily seen to parallel, at a more specific level, the general system problems (14). The definitions given here ~~xx~~ to Barnard's leadership functions have been brought into focus to highlight their congruence with the system problems, but no real violence has been done to their meaning as stated by him. Thus, the policy-maker or policy-making body is; a) importantly concerned with the determination of organizational objectives. This means not only defining goals initially, but also the continual accommodation and adjustment

---

13. See especially Parsons, Bales, & Shils, op.cit., Chaps. III and V.

14. Barnard, Chester, The Nature of Leadership, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1940.

of objectives in terms of the shifting opportunities for their realization. It means, too, maintaining a realistic level of aspiration and evaluating the gain or payoff to be obtained for the organization from the consummation of alternative goals. It involves, as Barnard remarks, "distinguishing the important from the unimportant." b) Goal-directed activity requires the manipulation of means or using the resources at hand to work on the object world in such a way as to bring desired goals nearer. This is what Barnard considers the "technical" aspect of leadership and the one which tends to be overemphasized ~~and~~ in training and judging leaders. It requires basically the skillful allocation of human capacities and resources as well as material resources accessible to or at the disposition of the organization for the performance of tasks. This means not only directing organizational energies and resources toward particular objectives, but also distributing material and other facilities to those individuals with the capacity to apply them with instrumental advantage for the organization (15).

c) The policy-maker must also give attention to the control of the instrumentality of action, or "preserving organization" as Barnard puts it. The roles or separate acts to be performed in the implementation of a given policy must be specified in addition to designating the persons who will perform them and the facilities which will be put at their disposal (see "b" above). There must be regulation and integration of the collaborative relations of individuals and sub-collectivities so that a working complementarity of action can be achieved. d) The stimulation of coordinated action, or "the business of persuasion"

---

15. There is an extensive discussion of the problems of allocation in Parsons, T., & Shils, E. (Eds.), Toward a General Theory of Action Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1951, pp.198-202.

in Barnard's terms, is the final major function of command. That is, the individual level of commitment to organizational values and objectives must be high enough for cooperative endeavor to move forward. Individual motives must be calibrated or meshed with organizational motives. This involves at one level the preservation of the integrity or logical consistency of policy over time and at another the manipulation of rewards and the application of sanctions with a view toward maintaining or modifying motivation and curbing disruptive action. Nothing more will be done here than point out the fundamental parallelism of the functional exigencies facing all systems of action according to theory and those facing policy-makers. However, determinate dynamic relationships have been posited for these states or phases of movement of a system of action (16). The working out of these relationships for policy-making bodies should represent a major advance in building a theory of policy.

#### Policy-Makers and Policy-Implementers

Two fundamental and instrumentally interdependent roles may be isolated for study within organizations whose action is guided by the decisions of a specialized executive and coordinating arm -- the policy-maker and the policy-implementer. It will be contended here that these two roles are explicitly or implicitly relevant for every member of an organization regardless of his own position within the organization. Even the man at the very top who may be performing policy-making roles almost exclusively is always to some extent implementing policy. His action is circumscribed by current and past decisions and is probably

---

16. Parsons, Bales, & Shils, op.cit., Chap.V.

never so narrowly defined that he does not have some direct participation in carrying out policy. At the same time, even in extremely autocratic organizations where the lower echelons of membership have little or no formal voice in guiding organizational action, the weight of popular feelings and reactions is brought to bear indirectly and must be taken into account in policy-making. In the most extreme case, the rank and file may be represented in the decision-making process only as some quantity "x" to be weighed against others in the minds of a remote elite. However, participation by the rank and file is ordinarily more direct, and there are multiple formal and informal avenues for communicating the reactions, desires, and opinions of the main body of the organization to the command echelons. In any case, it is fruitful to look at these instrumentally interconnected roles as representing a set of problems of exchange, the solution of which establishes the terms on which the policy-maker enters into mutually acceptable relations with the policy-implementer. There are four basic problems of exchange providing a set of invariant points of reference, or comparative categories for the analysis of the structure and content of roles in systems of instrumental action (17).

1. Disposal. Given the division of labor within an organization into policy-makers and policy-implementers, there must first of all be a continuing "market" or organizational demand for the performances that go with each of the two roles. The beneficiary of the actions of each is the organization and indirectly the actors themselves insofar as they share in the fruits of organizational endeavor. There is an exchange of binding decisions for contingent support by common commit-





with the study of policy formation in large scale organizations. Actually, such studies cast important light on group processes in decision-making and have important implications for the more general investigation of policy. In his studies of small groups Bales found that of every seven problem-solving attempts, on the average four are opinions, two are offers of information, and one is a suggestion (19). These were the averages observed among groups ranging from two to seven persons in number who were asked to discuss a human relations problem of the sort typically faced by an administrator and to arrive at a joint decision or set of conclusions. A comparison of the group decision process with the operation of a large-scale air defense network revealed that when the latter operation was outlined in a seven-step sequence, two steps had the interaction form of giving information, four intermediate steps had the interaction form of giving opinion, and only one step had the form of giving a suggestion. An extension of this thinking to the problem of socialization demonstrated that these basic seven steps could serve to describe the process by which individuals learn the new behaviors and internalize the value-orientations that go with new roles. On the basis of the evident broad applicability of this seven-step structure, it was suggested that "the seven steps state some highly general conditions of successful transition from one state of equilibrium of a system of action to a new one." (20). The seven steps represent essentially a breakdown of decision-making or a "set of symbol transformations which would guide the specific output of a behavioral system in relation to specific event inputs from the system environment.

---

19. Bales, Robert F., "How people interact in conferences", Scientific American, 1955, Vol. 192, #3.

20. Parsons, T., Bales, R.F., Zelditch, M., Olds, T., & Slater, P., Family, Socialization and Interaction Process, Glencoe, Ill., The Free Press, 1955, Chap.VII.

When the error checking process has included not only factual inputs from the environment...but also deductive inputs from the major premises of a common culture, and social inputs from the agreement and disagreement of group members, we speak of a 'group decision' or consensus"(21).

In the previously cited article by Balos, he speaks of the job of the decision-making organization as essentially one of building and maintaining a sufficiently complex and commonly accepted symbolic structure to guide or control the behavior of all operating units. Actually, the ~~xxxx~~ seven steps as initially stated by Bales in relation to the operation of the air defense network seem to be a paradigm for using culture rather than for building new symbolic structures. Stated in outline the seven steps are (22):

1. States primary observation
2. Makes tentative induction
3. Deduces conditional prediction
4. States observation of check fact
5. Identifies object as member of a class
6. States major premise relating classes of objects
7. Proposes specific action

This is a breakdown of the way in which an observed event is brought within an existing classificatory system, placed within the relevant category, and reacted to in terms appropriate to that category of objects. There is a difference between this kind of decision and socialization. The same difference is present in the case of policy-making and reflects the way in which the two latter processes represent actual culture

---

21. Ibid. It may be noted that analogous step-by-step breakdowns of individual thought processes which closely approximate this seven-step sequence have been offered before this time. Refer to Deutsch, "Communication theory and social science"; see also Kelley, H.Z. & Thibaut, J.W. ~~xxxx~~ Experimental studies of group problem solving and process. In Lindzey, G. (Ed.) Handbook of Social Psychology, Cambridge, Mass: Addison Wesley, 1954, Chap.21.

22. Balos, op.cit.

building. There is in the socialization process, as well as in that of policy-~~making~~<sup>building,</sup> a "cognitive leap" -- a recombination of elements into a new pattern of role relationships for the individual, a new policy for dealing with novel contingencies for the organization. In short, from the point of view of the action system the process terminates with a fresh symbolic creation which did not exist when the process began.

The seven steps suggested here as component acts in policy-making closely parallel the seven steps elaborated by Bales and Parsons. Steps 1 and 4 represent inputs of information; steps 2, 3, 5, and 6 are evaluations or opinions. Step 7 expresses commitment to a pattern of action in terms of a policy.

#### Seven Component Acts in Policy-Making

1. Primary perception of policy inadequacy -- an event engages attention of the system. This event may be an unanticipated consequence of a prior action, an independent change in the external situation, the perception of change in the internal state of the organization, etc.
2. Tentative generalization about the observed event -- the event is tagged as new (not provided for by existing policy) and likely to recur (that is, requiring new policy).
3. Conditional discrimination of possible adjustments or recombinations in policy to deal with this event.
4. Check perception of the tentative adjustments or recombinations -- implicit or explicit trial and error, experimentation, discussion, evaluation, etc.
5. Differentiation of this event as a (new) class of events to be handled most advantageously by a given combination of behaviors.
6. Generalization of these new acts into a policy governing overall organizational action with respect to this class of events, with specific directions for organizational components.
7. New policy and specifications of directions passed into storage or to application to action.

It is hoped that a little more has been accomplished here than simply

carrying over into a new context a set of categories for the sake of drawing some gross analogy. The close correspondence observed here among decision-making in small groups, in the air defense network, and in the processes of socialization and policy-making suggests that these seven steps do capture elements common to a wide range of transitional processes in action systems. Furthermore, breaking down policy-making into these seven component steps makes clear at once that important aspects of the process (especially 1 through 3) have received almost no attention from investigators. Much attention has been given to how decisions are made or policy is formed once the problem is "in the works". But how problems of policy arise or are brought to the attention of policy-making bodies -- how observed events get tagged and treated as posing problems for policy has received relatively little study. Viewing policy-making as being to an important extent the building of symbol systems also serves to cast a fresh perspective on the study of policy. Finally, this breakdown of the process into discrete steps makes it possible to visualize and study the conditions and operations that are characteristically present in an organization at different phases in the elaboration of new policy.

#### Summary

There has been offered here a definition of policy which sets off a distinct body of organizational activities as a subject for study under that rubric. A specification of a wide range of elements that affect the building and execution of policy by virtue of its organizational and interactional character has also been made. Lastly, an indication has been given of some first steps which might be taken to bring the study of policy within the framework of the theory of action. This brief sketch hardly does justice to the full possibilities that this body of theory

holds for the analysis of policy problems. However, it does offer a set of categories or invariant points of reference for the functional analysis of policy-making systems and two additional sets of stable reference points for the analysis of the role of policy-maker and the policy-implementer in any organization. In addition, the seven component acts in policy-making that have been discriminated provide another general and related paradigm for the comparative analysis of the policy-making process. It should be noted that this paradigm is closely linked to the view that has been repeatedly stressed here that policy-making is essentially a conscious and rational process. Insofar as the model has generality and serves to describe individual thought processes (e.g., the socialization case) as well as decision processes in small groups and complex organizations, it has reference primarily to those functions designated as appropriate by ~~Gordon~~ Gordon Allport (23). It takes the emphasis away from uncontrollable and diffuse drives and focusses on individual and organizational steering mechanisms. Thus, while with some adjustments the framework for study presented here can be applied to mass movements (even in their initial phases) and other relatively viable or opportunistic collectivities held together primarily by common dedication to a leader or symbol, it is admittedly aimed principally at the study of complex, enduring, and action-oriented organizations.

---

23. Allport, Gordon W. Becoming: Basic Considerations for a Psychology of Personality, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955.