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Policy analysis: Evaluating theories of the hermeneutic critique

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POLICY ANALYSIS: EVALUATING THEORIES

OF THE HERMENEUTIC CRITIQUE

by

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Bachelor of Arts
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Arts Degree in Ethics and Policy Studies
Department of Political Science
College of Liberal Arts

Graduate College
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ABSTRACT

Policy Analysis: Evaluating Theories of the Hermeneutic Critique

by

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This thesis evaluates three theories representing the three perspectives identified by Göktug Morçöl as perspectives of the hermeneutic critique in policy analysis, while explicating the revolutionary process that the science is currently undergoing. The evaluation is focused around the question as to whether the three theories are viable alternatives to positivist theories. First, a brief history of policy analysis is presented, highlighting the conditions that contributed to the rise of the general positivist paradigm as the ideal in policy analysis. This is followed by a summary and criticisms of the general positivist paradigm. Next, summaries of Dvora Yanow’s interpretive theory, Deborah Stone’s policy analysis as craft theory, and Frank Fischer’s discursive theory are presented as representatives of the three perspectives within the hermeneutic critique. Finally, an evaluation is offered of the three theories based on their ability to overcome the challenges presented by the criticisms of the general positivist paradigm.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Brief History of Policy Analysis

Policy analysis in a broad sense is "a form of applied research carried out to acquire a deeper understanding of sociotechnical issues and to bring about better solutions."\(^1\) The history of policy analysis traces back to ancient times.\(^2\) According to Stuart Nagel, "one can find implicit policy analysis in the legal rules of Babylonians, the ancient Hebrews, and the Egyptians, as well as in written and unwritten legal systems of ancient groups in Asia, Latin America, and Africa."\(^3\) Since then, policy analysis has evolved in various ways. Its evolution has been a product of philosophical, historical, political, and social influences. It has been influenced by political philosophers since the Renaissance, and nineteenth and twentieth century political and social thinkers, leaders and philosophers.\(^4\)

In the early twentieth century, policy analysis began to develop professional identities apart from that of political philosophy and sociology. Harold Lasswell was especially influential in the evolution of policy analysis. Deemed "The Modern Day Founder of


\(^3\) Ibid., 214.

\(^4\) Ibid., 214-215.
Policy Science,” policy analysis as envisioned by Lasswell can be understood as the seed of contemporary policy analysis. Lasswell presented a sweeping vision of policy sciences that at the same time sparked development in the new field and led to the stereotyping of his ideas as utopian.

According to Lasswell’s vision, “the policy sciences would be concerned with the ‘fundamental problems of man in society’ (Lerner and Lasswell, 1951:8)” and “[they] were to break from the past.” According to Garson, “Lasswell defined the policy scientist as one who was concerned with mastering the skills appropriate to enlightened decision in the context of public and civic order. In this definition, skills became emphasized in the field of policy analysis. Context—historical, cross-cultural, multi-method—represented a deep commitment in Lasswell’s concept of policy science, but one which was obscured by sweeping projections of empirical skills.” Thus, Lasswell’s single vision of policy analysis, in that it realized both humanistic and behavioralistic assumptions, can be understood as the point before the theoretical divide in policy analysis—the division between synoptic and anti-synoptic, positivist and postpositivist, or, as defined by Frank Fischer, empiricist and postempiricist approaches.

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5 ‘Policy science’ has often been used to refer to positivist policy analysis. The term ‘technocratic policy analysis’ has also been used this way.


7 Ibid., 6.

8 Ibid., 7.

Since Lasswell's time, policy analysis, as a field of study and profession, enjoyed tremendous growth. This growth was attributed by Nagel to three factors: "(1) the intense concern with policy problems in the late 1960s; (2) the development of new analytic and interdisciplinary methods that could be applied to evaluating alternative policies; and (3) the increasing attractiveness of government as an employer and research sponsor in the eyes of the contracting academic community." In the following passage, Nagel further illustrates the influence of these three factors to the growth of contemporary policy analysis in general:

The general growth in policy studies which began about 1971 had been stimulated by what may be regarded as pushing, enabling, and pulling factors. The pushing factors, or social forces, included the intense concern as of 1970 for policy problems in the areas of civil rights, poverty, Vietnam, women's liberation, and environmental protection. In the later 1970s the public shifted to an increased, and still quite intense, concern about inflation, energy, productivity, and the Middle East. Before the social sciences could convert such pushing factors into meaningful policy analysis products, they needed better methods, interdisciplinary relations, data banks, and data processing equipment, which have been developed over the last twenty years. Policy Analysis has also been stimulated by the increased attractiveness, or pull, of government as a source of research funding and job opportunities as well as by government's increased concern for deriving greater output from reduced tax dollars.

Although policy analysis in general (field, theory, and practice) grew much more than it had in the past during these times, and its importance to society and government was being realized to a greater extent, this growth was primarily focused around the positivist or, as Garson refers to it, the synoptic tradition. According to Garson, three powerful forces supported the synoptic tradition. As Garson explains, "First, it rode on the crest of

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10 Stuart Nagel, Contemporary Public Policy Analysis (University, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1984), xiii.

11 Ibid., 13.
behavioral revolution in the political and social sciences, with its interdisciplinary emphasis, focus on quantitative precision, and goal of systematic empirical theory (See Ranney, ed., 1962). Second, it retained some of the mantle of legitimacy of the vision of service to national planning conferred on it by Lasswell, Merriam, and others...[and third,] the social ferment of the 1960s led to intense criticism of the pluralist alternative. Thus, given these powerful forces and those factors that contributed to the growth of policy analysis in general, the synoptic tradition—positivist or empiricist approaches to policy analysis—became realized as the ideal model for policy analysis.

Brian Fay also notes two historical factors regarding the evolution of positivist policy analysis. First, Fay discusses the historical context in which the factors and forces mentioned by Garson and Nagel are to have led to the growth of positivist policy

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12 Garson, 10. By ‘pluralist alternatives’ Garson is referring to the ‘anti-synoptic tradition.’ And, according to Anne Larason Schneider and Hellen Ingram, “The appropriate role of government in society, according to pluralist theories, is to produce public policies that represent interests of the electorate, resolve conflicts, reflect reasonable compromises among competing perspectives, and ensure the continued stability of the collectivity along with its preferred economic cultural characteristics” (Policy Design for Democracy, Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1997, 13). Used with permission of Kansas University Press and coauthor Helen Ingram.

As Schneider and Ingram further note, such authors as Ted Lowi offered the kind of intense criticisms referred to by Garson in the above passage. They explain how “During three decades of writing Lowi has argued that the competition among interest groups that pluralist theory holds as a necessary feature of democracy does not exist in the United States. Lowi (1964) contended that the pluralist vision of democracy as a competition among a large number of relatively equal groups has been replaced with ‘interest group liberalism’ in which powerful groups capture the policy-making and implementation process. Interest group liberalism cannot achieve rational policy results (because it is unable to say ‘no’ to anyone) nor can it address issues of justice (because the state is mainly the tool of powerful interests)” (Ibid., 22).

13 Garson, 11.

analysis. According to Fay, "the idea of a policy science arose, and has been embedded, only in the context of industrial society." The advancement of science and technology in modern industrial society led not only to a conceptual change of the structure of order and authority from pre-industrial society of religion to the modern industrial society of science and technology, but it also led to the advancement of a social science founded upon a paradigm believed to be that of the natural sciences—the positivist paradigm.

Auguste Comte, the founder of positivism, had best articulated a second factor that lead to the adoption of a positivist social science. Fay notes that Comte concluded that:

men’s attitudes themselves change as a result of the spread of the conceptual assumptions inherent in natural science. For obvious reasons these changes make obsolete or ineffective the religion or magic or traditional justifications from authority which in pre-industrial societies had promoted order, established status, set communal goals, and legitimated authority. Science deprives men of the old faith by which they lived and thus helps to destroy their old social order; thus, it can cause suffering and a sense of helplessness in the face of this suffering. It is for this reason that a new faith, one compatible with and arising out of the scientific spirit, must emerge from this chaos and lead men out of the void into which they had been thrown.

In policy analysis, this new faith was provided by the positivist paradigm—a paradigm that distinguishes between facts and values as knowable and not knowable, that believes knowledge is based on observation and can be objective, and that utilizes scientific methods for inquiry.

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15 Ibid., 58.
16 Ibid., 18-20.
17 Ibid., 20.
The positivist paradigm for policy analysis, what is still known today as the dominant paradigm in policy analysis, has been under critical attack by theorists and practitioners alike. Authors such as Brian Fay, Dvora Yanow, Deborah Stone, Frank Fischer, John Forester, Martin Rein, M.E. Hawkesworth, Anne Larason Schneider, Helen Ingram, and Rosemarie Tong have offered several criticisms regarding the positivist paradigm in policy analysis. In response to these criticisms, theorists and practitioners of policy analysis have offered or attempted to formulate various theories of policy analysis that address the shortcomings of positivist theories. These alternative theories came to be known as postpositivist theories or postempiricist theories. Although there are many variations of postpositivist theories, they can be distinguished from positivist theories based on their reliance on a similar paradigm—the general postpositivist paradigm. In addition, some current offerings of postpositivist alternatives can be viewed as modern versions of the anti-synoptic tradition, or neo-pluralist theories. In this, we can understand some of the current offerings of postpositivist theories as a return to the anti-synoptic or pluralist traditions of the past.

The question that concerns this thesis is: are postpositivist theories viable alternatives to positivist theories? Within the context of the scientific revolution that the science of policy analysis is currently undergoing, this question is concerned with the question of whether the success of postpositivist theories, in overcoming the challenges presented by the criticisms of positivist theories, warrants us to reject the positivist paradigm for the general postpositivist paradigm? In other words, are there good reasons for accepting the
general postpositivist paradigm as the new dominant paradigm, thereby calling for a
revolution in the science of policy analysis?

Due to practical constraints, the scope of this paper will be limited to only three
postpositivist theories: Dvora Yanow's interpretive theory, Deborah Stone's theory of
policy analysis as craft, and Frank Fischer's discursive theory. Each of these theories
represents the three theoretical perspectives Göktug Morçöl identifies as perspectives of
the hermeneutic critique, which he claims to be arguably the most coherent theoretical
stream of postpositivist theories. In evaluating these three theories, this thesis asks
whether: (1) these theories, each representing one of the three perspectives of the
hermeneutic critique, undertake to overcome the criticisms that positivist theories have
been charged? (2) If they do so adequately, then where is this success located? In other
words, is their success in overcoming the criticisms that positivist theories have been
charged due specifically to paradigm shifts? (3) If not, at what point do postpositivist
theories also succumb to the criticisms faced by positivist theories? And (4) are these
postpositivist theories subject to problems of their own, possibly arising from their
alternative paradigm?

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18 Göktug Morçöl, *A New Mind For Policy Analysis: Toward a Post-Newtonian and
As Morçöl notes, “I group postpositivist theories in the policy analysis literature into five
theory streams: contextuality and presupposition theories, hermeneutic critique, problem
structuring and issue framing theories, methodological critique, and participatory policy
analysis. Arguably, among these theory streams, the hermeneutic critique presents the
most coherent perspective...There are three distinguishable, but overlapping, theoretical
perspectives within the hermeneutic critique: phenomenological/interpretive theories,
discourse theory, and critical theory” (Morçöl, 104-106).
Outline of Chapters

In the beginning of Chapter I, we were introduced to a brief history of how the positivist paradigm became the dominant paradigm for policy analysis. This chapter was an introduction to the conditions that led to the establishment of policy analysis in the phase of normal science in the broader sense of a scientific revolution. As Thomas S. Kuhn notes, before there is a revolution in a field of science, there is first a time of 'normal science.' After the establishment of the positivist paradigm as the dominant paradigm in policy analysis, the field of policy analysis enjoyed a period of normal science. The positivist paradigm served as the foundation for succeeding generations and practitioners to carry out policy analysis.

Chapter II will provide a general outline of the positivist paradigm for policy analysis along with some of the criticisms with which this paradigm, and its resulting theories have been charged. In the broader sense of the revolution of the science of policy analysis, this chapter introduces the kinds of criticisms that have slowly led many theorists and practitioners to abandon the positivist paradigm for policy analysis. These criticisms are founded upon the recognition that the objects of inquiry for policy analysis

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19 Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3d ed., (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996). 'Normal science,' as Kuhn continues, "means research firmly based on one or more past scientific achievements, achievements that some particular scientific community acknowledges for a time as supplying the foundation for its further practice" (Ibid., 10). These achievements "served for a time implicitly to define the legitimate problems and methods of research for a field for succeeding generations and practitioners," and they were able to do so because "the achievement was sufficiently unprecedented to attract an enduring group of adherents away from competing modes of scientific activity" and "it was sufficiently open ended to leave all sorts of problems for the redefined group of practitioners to resolve" (Ibid.). Kuhn refers to the achievements that share these two characteristics as 'paradigms' (Ibid).
are value-laden. This is similar to what Kuhn describes as the discovery of anomalies, and led to a crisis in the field of policy analysis—a crisis in which theorists and practitioners began to question the adequacy of the dominant positivist paradigm for policy analysis. As Kuhn explains, these kinds of abandonment of a dominant paradigm “are the pivots about which scientific revolutions turn.”

Chapter III introduces three theories that are to represent the three perspectives of the hermeneutic critique. The theories are: Yanow’s interpretive theory as a representative of the interpretive/phenomenological perspective, Stone’s craft theory as a representative of the discourse perspective, and Fischer’s discursive theory as a representative of the critical perspective. These theories are presented as three distinct postpositivist theories, all sharing the same postpositivist paradigm.

In the broader sense, this chapter is an introduction to the end of crisis in the field of policy analysis. As Kuhn notes, the end of crisis can occur in three ways, one of which is “the emergence of a new candidate for paradigm and the ensuing battle over its acceptance.” Thus, as this chapter introduces three theories, and their alternative paradigm, that have been developed in response to the criticisms of positivist theories, it at the same time introduces the new candidate paradigm for policy analysis, which marks the end of crisis within the process of revolution for the science of policy analysis.

Chapter IV presents the evaluations of the three theories representing the three theoretical perspectives of the hermeneutic critique. The evaluations are focused around

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20 Ibid., 62.

21 Ibid., 34.

22 Ibid., 84.
four specific challenges presented by the criticisms of positivist theories of policy analysis. These challenges are: (1) the challenge of overcoming the ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy, (2) the challenge of providing a democratic process of decision-making within their method of policy analysis, (3) the challenge of providing a coherent theory of policy analysis, and (4) the challenge of resolving the problem of policy analysis as ideology.

In the broader sense, this chapter is a contribution to the revolutionary process of the science of policy analysis by adding to the ensuing battle over the acceptance of the new candidate paradigm—the general postpositivist paradigm. As stated by Kuhn, "The resulting transition to a new paradigm is scientific revolution," but this transition cannot occur until alternative paradigms have been evaluated as well; until it has been established that these alternative paradigms are more worthy of acceptance than the dominant positivist paradigm for policy analysis. As Kuhn notes, "Paradigms gain their status because they are more successful than their competitors in solving a few problems that the group of practitioners has come to recognize as acute."

Finally, Chapter V is the concluding chapter to this thesis. This chapter begins with a summary of the four previous chapters. Then it moves on to address the major questions considered by this thesis. It answers the questions as to whether: (1) these theories, each representing one of the three perspectives of the hermeneutic critique, undertake to overcome the criticisms that positivist theories have been charged? (2) If they do so adequately, then where is this success located? In other words, is their success in

\[23\] Ibid., 90.

\[24\] Ibid., 23.
overcoming the criticisms that positivist theories have been charged due specifically to paradigm shifts? (3) If not, at what point do postpositivist theories also succumb to the criticisms faced by positivist theories? And (4) are these postpositivist theories subject to problems of their own, possibly arising from their alternative paradigm? Finally, it concludes with possible recommendations for the formulation of theories of policy analysis.

In answering the major questions considered by this thesis, it is apparent that theories of the hermeneutic critique, although agreeing on a similar general paradigm for policy analysis, disagree in some respect as to the legitimate methods for policy analysis. Yet, this discrepancy does not alter the possible acceptance of their general postpositivist paradigm. As Kuhn notes, “[scientists] can, that is, agree in their identification of a paradigm without agreeing on, or even attempting to produce, a full interpretation or rationalization of it.”

In the broader sense of the scientific revolution of policy analysis, this chapter argues for the acceptance of the new candidate as the new paradigm for policy analysis. It argues for the need to move beyond the positivist paradigm of policy analysis to the general postpositivist paradigm. In essence, it calls for a revolution in the science of policy analysis.

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25 Ibid., 44.
CHAPTER II

THE POSITIVIST PARADIGM

AND CRITICISMS

The Positivist Paradigm for Policy Analysis

As mentioned in Chapter I, the three factors Nagel identified as contributing to the growth of policy analysis in general, and the factors noted by Garson and Fay regarding the growth of positivist policy analysis, established the positivist paradigm for policy analysis as the dominant paradigm during the mid- to late-twentieth century.

In the following sections, I will first offer a summary of the major tenets that constitute the general positivist paradigm. I will first explicate the major ontological tenets of the positivist paradigm, then move on to the epistemological tenets, and finally to the methodological tenets. By doing so, we will be able to see how the ontological tenets lead to certain epistemological tenets, and how these epistemological tenets lead to

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1 Nagel, 13; Garson, 10; Fay, 18-20.

2 According to a recent study by Morçöl, “policy professionals are not monolithically positivistic in their beliefs, but there is a considerable degree of support for positivistic positions among them, especially among practitioners and those professionals whose educational backgrounds are in economics, mathematics, and science” (Morçöl, “Positivist Beliefs Among Policy Professionals: An Empirical Investigation”, Policy Sciences, vol. 34, 2001: 395).
methodological tenets. I will then offer some of the major arguments against the general positivist paradigm.³

Later on, in Chapter III, the explication of the major tenets of the three theories representing the three perspectives of the hermeneutic critique will be carried out in this same manner. This allows us to locate the differences between the tenets of the positivist paradigm and those of the three theories representing the three perspectives of the hermeneutic critique.

In understanding the general tenets behind positivist theories of policy analysis, and the criticisms of these tenets, we will come to understand how the theories, referred to by Morçöl as theories of the hermeneutic critique, are among the theories formulated in response to the positivist paradigm and their criticisms. Thus, we will come to understand how these criticisms have led to the abandonment of the dominant positivist paradigm for policy analysis—the pivots on which the revolution of the science of policy analysis is turning.

1. Ontology

According to the Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "The word 'ontology' is used to refer to the philosophical investigation of existence, or being. Such investigation may be directed towards the concept of being, asking what 'being' means, or what it is for something to exist; it may also (or instead) be concerned with the question 'what

³ It may be said that some of the criticisms of the general positivist paradigm offered in this chapter may not be applicable to some positivist theories, yet it must be understood that these criticisms are against the general understanding of positivist theories, and the general paradigm that they may share. As mentioned, there are numerous variations of positivist theories, and the paradigm presented in this chapter may not necessarily be held by all positivist theories. Nor are criticisms presented necessarily applicable to all positivist theories.
exists?’ or ‘what general sorts of things there are?”4 Also noted by the Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “It is common to speak of a philosopher’s ontology, meaning the kinds of thing they take to exist, or ontology of a theory, meaning the things that would have to exist for that theory to be true.”5

This second common usage of ontology, the ontology of a theory, is what is referred to in this section regarding the ontology of positivist theories of policy analysis.6 Thus, the following presuppositions are the major tenets regarding the categories of things that are assumed to exist, according to positivist theories of policy analysis, for the theories to be able to bear out their implications. This usage of ontology is also what is referred to later on in Chapter III regarding the ontology of the three theories representing the three perspectives of the hermeneutic critique: Yanow’s interpretive theory, Stone’s analysis as craft theory, and Fischer’s discursive theory.

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5 Ibid.

6 Carl G. Hempel, a prominent figure in the philosophy of science and a former member of the Vienna Circle, refers to these ontological tenets as “internal principles.” As he explains, internal principles “characterize the basic entities and processes invoked by the theory and the laws to which they are assumed to conform” (Carl G. Hempel, Philosophy of Natural Science, Foundation of Philosophy Series, Engelwood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966, 72). HEMPEL, CARL, PHILOSOPHY OF NATURAL SCIENCE, 1st Edition, © 1966. Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ.
a) Ontological Tenet of the Fact-Value Dichotomy

One of the major ontological tenets held by positivist theories of policy analysis is the fact-value dichotomy. According to the ontological tenet of the fact value-dichotomy, there are two general categories of things that exist: physical objects and value claims. Physical objects, simply put, are objects that have physical existence (location and dimensions). These physical objects yield facts, which are propositional statements of knowledge that are supported by empirical evidence or data derived from observation of physical objects. Value claims are those statements that cannot be support by physical objects alone. In general, value claims are statements of belief that entail values or normative criteria, interpretations, and meanings, such as 'it is wrong to lie' or 'ice cream is good.'

Yet, the ontological tenet of the fact-value dichotomy is not only the claim that fact that there are two general categories of things, physical objects and value claims, but it is also about how these categories of things are separated into categories of objects that can yield knowledge or only nonsense. According to the ontological tenet of the fact-value dichotomy, only physical objects are objects of knowledge, whereas value claims are not. Thus, the ontological tenet of the fact-value dichotomy implies epistemological assumptions that limit inquiry the kinds of objects for inquiry in positivist policy analysis to physical objects by obviating inquiry into value-claims.

b) The Tenet of Universal Laws

Another ontological tenet of positivist theories of policy analysis is that universal laws exist. This second tenet is not only evident in their epistemological and
methodological tenets, but it is also a tenet that reflects the hope of what can be accomplished by positivist social science—the hope of social engineering. As Martin Rein notes, according to the view of positivist social science:

The only effective way to manage the difficulties presented by man’s social environment is through the systematic application of the ‘scientific method.’ We know that this method has been used effectively in the natural sciences to win control over the physical environment. If social science can apply these techniques of analysis to social understanding, it may also acquire some of the powerful predictive capabilities of the natural sciences. The influence of social science, therefore, depends on its ability to discover general laws of social processes which will eventually enable man to control his social environment.7

As we will see later on, universal laws of social phenomena are usually explicated in the deductive-nomological form or the laws of probabilistic form. These universal laws, explicated in deductive-nomological form or the laws of probabilistic form, deal specifically with the correlation between or among physical objects or things that are reducible to physical objects. Once tested and proven to an acceptable degree, they become what are known to be scientific laws. In this sense, they become facts, or propositional statements of knowledge about the correlation between physical objects that are supported by empirical evidence.

2. Epistemology

According to the Cambridge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, epistemology is “the study of the nature of knowledge and justification; specifically, the study of (a) the defining features; (b) the substantive conditions, and (c) the limits of knowledge and

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justification." Thus, this section asks, "given the ontology of positivist paradigms, the category of things that are assumed to exist, what are the criteria for knowledge for the category of things that are assumed to exist?" This is the meaning of epistemology also referred to in the following chapter regarding the epistemology of the three theories representing the three perspectives of the hermeneutic critique.

a) Epistemological Tenet of the

Fact-Value Dichotomy

One of the major epistemological tenets of the positivist paradigm is the assumption of the fact-value dichotomy. This is the assumption that, "All knowledge was believed to depend on observation, thus any claims, whether theological, metaphysical, philosophical, ethical, normative, or aesthetic, which were not rooted in empirical observation, were rejected as meaningless." This tenet is founded upon the verification criterion of meaning, which "stipulated that a contingent criterion of meaning is meaningful if, and only if, it could be empirically verified." Therefore, according to the epistemological tenet of the fact-value dichotomy only facts, which are supported by empirical evidence, can be meaningful and so be knowledge. Those propositional statements that are supported by value claims are regarded as meaningless, and so cannot be items of knowledge. Thus, according to the epistemological tenet of the fact-value

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10 Ibid.

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dichotomy, the appropriate objects of inquiry are physical objects, and only facts can be knowledge.

b) Characteristics of Knowledge

Derived from their ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy, positivist theories of policy analysis conclude that one can obtain knowledge that is free of politics and individual biases. According to Hawkesworth, “Mutually reinforcing empiricist [or positivist] assumptions dispel questions concerning the political cast of empiricist commitments by providing a formula for preserving the objectivity of scientific investigations and for insulating scientific research from the taint of politics.”

As noted by Richard S. Rudner, the word ‘objective’ “has been used, in fact, to apply to at least four different things: (1) the verisimilitude of ideas, i.e., the replicalike character of mental imagery, (2) the truth of statements, (3) the reliability of methodologies, and (4) the psychological disposition of an investigator to have or believe, or employ the kinds of ideas, statements, or methodologies mentioned under 1, 2, or 3.” Here, Hawkesworth is referring to the third use of ‘objectivity’ defined by Rudner. Thus, it is concluded that because the reliability of scientific investigation is preserved and scientific research is insulated from political taint, that the results of such research—the knowledge gained from such research—would be ‘objective’ in regard to the truth of the statements. Any other claims are ‘subjective.’

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11 Ibid., 3.

Another major epistemological tenet held by positivist theories of policy analysis in general is the belief that "the task of science [is] understood to consist in the inductive discovery of regularities which [exist] in the external world." These regularities, understood as scientific laws provide:

The foundation for scientific explanation, which according to the precepts of the Covering Law model [the causal model of explanation], consisted in demonstrating that the events to be explained could have been expected, given certain initial conditions...and the general laws of the field.... Within the framework of the positivist conception of science, the discovery of scientific laws also provided the foundation for prediction which consisted in demonstrating that an event would occur given the future occurrence of certain initial conditions and the operations of the general laws of the field.

Thus, according to this tenet, scientific explanation is to be in the form of a deductive-nomological explanation, also referred to as the Covering Law model of explanation.

Yet, according to Hempel, this is not the only form that scientific explanations can take. The deductive-nomological form of scientific explanation provides the strongest sense of an explanation, for "in deductive inferences from true premises [as in deductive-nomological explanations], the conclusion is invariably true." Another form of explanation that a scientific explanation can take is, as Hempel states, "Laws of probabilistic form or probabilistic laws, for short." According to Hempel,

A probabilistic explanation of a particular event shares certain basic characteristics with the corresponding deductive-nomological type of explanation.

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13 Hawkesworth, 38.
14 Ibid., 39
15 Hempel, 58
16 Ibid.
In both cases, the event is explained in reference to others, with which the explanandum event is connected by laws. But in one case, the laws are of universal form; in the other, of probabilistic form. And while the deductive explanation shows that, on the information contained in the explanans, the explanandum was to be expected with ‘deductive certainty’, an inductive explanation shows only that, on the information contained in the explanans, the explanandum was to be expected with high probability, and perhaps with “practical certainty.”\(^{17}\)

Thus, according to positivist theories of policy analysis, knowledge of social phenomena is to be explicated in the deductive-nomological form or the form of probabilistic laws. The basis of both of these forms of knowledge is that they denote patterns or regularities of physical objects, and can be verified at least in principle by empirical evidence.

In order to explicate a social phenomenon in terms of deductive-nomological form or the form of probabilistic laws, positivist theories of policy analysis in general require that the explanation of the social phenomenon must meet the verification criterion of meaning. Again, this is the criterion that, “A contingent proposition is meaningful if, and only if, it could be empirically verified.”\(^{18}\) In order for a proposition to be empirically verifiable, the proposition must meet the two criteria of scientific explanation: the criterion of explanatory relevance and the criterion of testability.

According to Hempel, the criterion of explanatory relevance requires that “the explanatory information adduced affords good grounds for believing that the phenomenon to be explained did, or does, indeed occur.”\(^{19}\) ‘Good grounds’, according to Hempel requires a physical account of the phenomenon. As Hempel explains with his

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 59

\(^{18}\) Hawkesworth, 38.

\(^{19}\) Hempel, 48.
example of the scientific explanation of a rainbow, "The explanatory information provided by the physical account would constitute good grounds for expecting or believing that a rainbow will appear under the specific circumstances."\footnote{Ibid.} This is a tautological explanation of 'good grounds.' 'Good grounds' is the physical account of a phenomenon. Thus, only those objects that can be given physical accounts or reducible to physical accounts can produce knowledge that meet the criterion of explanatory relevance. This then makes value claims ontologically dependent. In essence, the criterion of explanatory relevance limits the scope of inquiry to physical objects or those things reducible to physical objects.

The criterion of testability claims that, "The statements constituting a scientific explanation must be capable of empirical test."\footnote{Ibid., 49.} This criterion assumes that an explanation in which "no empirical findings could possibly bear it out or disconfirm it" is 'devoid of empirical content' and therefore 'affords no grounds for expecting the characteristic phenomenon.'\footnote{Ibid.} Thus, any finding that fails to meet the criterion of testability is considered to lack "objective explanatory power",\footnote{Ibid.} it is unable to yield any causal explanation in the form of a deductive-nomological explanation, or probabilistic law, and is therefore useless to scientific inquiry. As Hempel explains:

\begin{quote}
If a statement or set of statements is not testable at least in principle, in other words, if it has no test implications at all [in that there are no empirical data to refer to], then it cannot be significantly proposed or entertained as a scientific
\end{quote}
hypothesis or theory, for no conceivable empirical finding can then accord or conflict with it. In this case, it has no bearing whatever on empirical phenomenon, or as we will say, it lacks empirical import.24

In other words, any causal explanation that lacks empirical import, is not empirically testable, and cannot be maintained as a significant scientific explanation since the explanation cannot be confirmed or disconfirmed through scientific testing—it cannot be shown to be true or false. And, as Hempel notes, “deductive-nomological explanations satisfy the requirements of explanatory relevance in the strongest sense: the explanatory information they provide implies the explanandum sentence deductively offers logically conclusive grounds why the explanandum phenomenon is to be expected.”25

Probabilistic laws are also thought to meet the two requirements of relevancy and testability for a scientific explanation, though they are believed to do so to a lesser degree, for they employ the logic of inductive reasoning rather than deductive reasoning.

Thus, also according to the criterion of testability, only physical objects, or those objects that can be reduced to physical objects, can yield knowledge, since only physical objects have empirical import and so, are testable.

3. Methodology

Also according to the Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy, methodology is a branch of the philosophy of science, and the philosophy of science is “the branch of philosophy that is centered on a critical examination of the sciences: their methods and their results. [The branch of methodology] explores the methods by which science arrives at its posited

24 Ibid., 30.

25 Ibid., 52. By ‘explanandum sentence’, Hempel means “the sentence describing [the phenomenon]…” and by explanandum phenomenon, Hempel means ‘the phenomenon to be accounted for by an explanation” (Ibid., 50).
truths concerning the world and critically explores alleged rationales for these methods. Thus, the question regarding methodology addressed in the following section is, 'what are the major tenets of the positivist paradigm in regard to the methods of inquiry for obtaining knowledge of those category of things that are assumed to exist?' A similar question is addressed in Chapter III regarding the methods of the three theories representing the three perspective of the hermeneutic critique.

a) The Positivist Tenet of the Unity of Science

Methodologically, positivist theories of policy analysis uphold the unity of science. This is the tenet that "the logic of scientific inquiry was the same for all fields. Whether natural phenomena or social phenomena were the objects of study, the method for acquiring valid knowledge and the requirements for explanation and prediction remained the same." It is important to note here, that the positivist's tenet of the unity of science specifically entails that the appropriate paradigm for natural and social science is the paradigm used for natural science. This tenet leads to the subsumption of methods analogous to the scientific method of inquiry within the positivist paradigm for policy analysis.


27 Hawkesworth, 39.
b) The Tenet of the Rational Model

of Decision-Making

The subsumption of a method of inquiry analogous to what Hempel refers to as the *method of hypothesis* leads theories of positivist policy analysis to use models of rational decision-making as methods for policy analysis.²⁸

As Hempel explains:

Scientific Knowledge, as we have seen, is not arrived at by applying some inductive inference procedure to antecedently collected data, but rather by what is often called “the method of hypothesis”, i.e. by inventing hypotheses as tentative answers to a problem under study, and then subjecting these to empirical test. It will be part of such test to see whether the hypothesis is borne out by whatever relevant findings may have been gathered before its formulation; an acceptable hypothesis will have to fit the available relevant data. Another part of the test will consist in deriving new test implications from the hypothesis and checking these by suitable observations or experiments. As we noted earlier, even extensive testing with entirely favorable results does not establish a hypothesis conclusively, but provides only more or less strong support for it.²⁹

Modeled after the method of hypothesis, positivist theories of policy analysis use a rational decision-making model of inquiry. As Jenkins-Smith explains:

In the style of the rational decision maker, the policy analyst is to use a range of analytical techniques and multiple fields of knowledge to engage in a number of distinct procedures or steps, including: (1) identifying the ‘problem’ to be resolved, (2) specifying the goal(s) to be sought through the public policy, (3) identifying or inventing the available policy alternatives, (4) estimating the effects of each of the alternatives, both favorable and unfavorable, (5) imputing values in a single, commensurable metric to those effects, and (6) choosing the ‘best’ policy alternative according to an explicit decision rule.³⁰

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²⁸ Hempel, 17.
²⁹ Ibid., 17-18.
³⁰ Hank C. Jenkins-Smith, *Democratic Politics and Policy Analysis* (Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1990), 11. Jenkins-Smith notes that “Many such lists of steps are enumerated in the policy analysis literature, each quite similar to the list presented here. See, for example, Stoky and Zeckhauser, *A Primer of Policy Analysis*, pp. 5-6; David Nachmias, *Public Policy Evaluation: Approaches and Methods* (New York:
Here we see that the first three steps of the rational model of decision-making are similar to the first step of the method of hypothesis, that of formulating a hypothesis. The following two steps, steps four and five, correlate with the next step in the method of hypothesis, that of testing the hypothesis. The final step, step six, of choosing the ‘best’ policy alternative correlates with the final step within the method of hypothesis, that of determining whether the test implications warrant support of the hypothesis. In the case of the rational model of decision-making for policy analysis, to conclude that the empirical data or facts supports a specific policy alternative to a greater degree is to say that that specific policy alternative is the best in comparison to rival alternatives, just as in the method of hypothesis wherein experimental results are used to validate a specific theory that is in contest with other theories.

To further explicate the rational model of decision-making in policy analysis, it is important to understand that in many positivist theories of policy analysis the goals or objectives, and the problems, are understood to be given by the decision-maker or makers and are reducible to physical objects that can be quantifiably measured. As Quade notes, the objectives are "often stated or implied by the decision-maker." This is because according to the ontological and epistemological tenets of the positivist paradigm for policy analysis, value claims are outside the limits of their field of inquiry, yet policy

St. Martins Press, 1979) pp. 12-18; Alice Rivlin, *Systematic Thinking for Social Action* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, 1971), pp. 3-5. The Graduate School of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley propounds a version of the above list called the ‘eightfold path,’ which seeks to give somewhat greater emphasis to the role of analysis in creating policy alternatives. For a critique of this restrictive ‘problem solving’ approach, see Martin Rein and Sheldon White, ‘Policy Research Belief and Doubt,’ in *Policy Analysis*, 3(2) (Spring 1977), pp. 239-271" (Ibid).

31 Quade, 45.
necessarily deals with values in terms of goals or objectives. Thus, positivist theories of policy analysis attempt to stay within the boundaries of inquiry set by their ontological and epistemological tenets by leaving the determination of goals or objectives to the decision-maker(s), or taking them as 'given' by the framing of the problem.

In addition, Stone notes that there are in general five concepts that dominate the language of policy discourse in regards to goals: equity, efficiency, security, liberty, and community ‘goals.’ These vague and ambiguous concepts, as Stone continues, are often treated as having a single definition or criterion, and this single definition or criterion is established by the decision-maker(s). By treating them as having a single definition or criterion, it is assumed that they are amenable to quantitative measurements of variables that are characterized by physical objects. Thus, positivist policy analysts not only understand goals as given by the decision-maker(s), but they are given in terms that are, or can be reducible to physical objects. The basis of this treatment of goals can be located in their ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy. The ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy, as stated earlier, limit the scope of valid inquiry to physical objects, or those things that are reducible to physical objects, in order to arrive at valid knowledge.

In regard to problems, problem definition is generally understood as “a statement of a goal and the discrepancy between it and the status quo.” In this sense, the problem is


33 Ibid., 133.
also given by the decision-maker(s) and reducible to the analysis of physical objects. As Stone notes, defining the problem becomes “a matter of observation and arithmetic—measuring the difference between two states of affairs.” This assumption is also informed by the ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy. Thus, it is believed that the discrepancy between the stated goals and the status quo can also be determined by quantifiable measurements of physical objects.

The steps four, five, and six within the method of rational decision-making are also entailed by the ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy. Although the third step of creating alternatives relies on the imagination of the analyst, the steps of estimating the effects of each of the alternatives, both favorable and unfavorable; imputing values in a single, commensurable metric to those effects; and choosing the ‘best’ policy alternative, or providing a hierarchy of alternatives, according to an explicit decision rule are highly dependent upon empirical evidence. In regard to estimating the effects of each alternative of the alternatives (both favorable and unfavorable), and imputing values in a single, commensurable metric to those effects, requires the analyst to “define the variables [of the social problem] in terms of specific indicators.” In regard to choosing the ‘best’ policy alternative, or providing a hierarchy of alternatives, according to an explicit decision rule, most often, empirical evidence is sought through the quantitative analysis of the defined variables, and the criterion of

34 Ibid.

efficiency is used to determine which alternative is the ‘best’ alternative.\textsuperscript{36} As Fay explains, this is the primary concern of the positivist policy analyst, in that they are concerned only with determining the ‘best’ means to a given end in light of other alternatives.

c) Defining the Purpose of Policy Analysis

Finally, positivist theories of policy analysis, informed by their tenet of the unity of science and the rational model of decision-making, uphold a specific definition of policy analysis. As mentioned, the ultimate objective of positive policy analysis is “choosing the ‘best’ policy alternative according to an explicit decision rule.”\textsuperscript{37} This leads to the conclusion that the main goal of policy analysis is to arrive at a specific solution, the ‘best’ policy alternative. This conception of policy analysis necessarily entails a specific choice for the policy maker, that choice being the one that has been determined as the ‘best’ in light of other alternatives.

In this sense, the positivist paradigm for policy analysis portrays policy analysis as a puzzle to be solved. One of the main characteristics of a puzzle is the assured existence of a solution.\textsuperscript{38} Thus, according to positivist conceptions of policy analysis, there is always a solution to any policy problem; all that is needed is the proper application of the accepted paradigm for the analysis of policy. In this sense, the positivist paradigm for policy analysis can be seen as insulating the analyst from the kinds of problems that do not fit the puzzle form, such as problems of conflicting values, interpretations, and

\textsuperscript{36} Fay, 50-51.

\textsuperscript{37} Jenkins-Smith, 11.

\textsuperscript{38} Kuhn, 37.
meanings. As Kuhn notes, "A paradigm can, for that matter, even insulate the community [of scientists] from those socially important problems that are not reducible to the puzzle form, because they cannot be stated in terms of the conceptual and instrumental tools the paradigm supplies."\(^{39}\)

**Criticisms of the Positivist Paradigm in Policy Analysis**

Recently, there is resurgence and a growing acknowledgement of the criticisms against the general positivist paradigm in policy analysis. Much of this is due to the still pervasive use of positivist theories in policy analysis. Criticisms of the positivist paradigm of policy analysis speak not only of the flaws within the foundations of positivist theories of policy analysis, but also to the shortcomings of the practice of positivist policy analysis. One of these shortcomings has been discussed by Beryl A. Radin regarding the difficulties presented by the use of cost-benefit analysis, a prevalent method of rational decision-making used by positivist theories of policy analysis. As Radin notes:

> There is a wide range of technical problems involved in the application of the cost-benefit approach. Identifying and monetizing relevant impacts and discounting for time and risk are much easier to accomplish when one is faced with a decision about building or not building a specific dam than when the decision involves a program administered by fifty different states. Even then, as Daniel Mazmanian and Jeanne Nienaber point out, the technique is often less clear-cut than it appears at first blush. The entrance of the environmental movement into the decision environment of the Army Corps of Engineers forced that agency to think about decisions that have value conflicts surrounding them. When environmental advocates began to do their adversarial cost-benefit analysis,

\(^{39}\) Ibid.

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it became very clear that the federal government was facing policy choices involving value disputes, not simply technical determinations.\textsuperscript{40}

These kinds of value disputes, which illustrate how positivist methods of policy analysis are ill equipped at handling certain policy issues, are likened to the anomalies of scientific discoveries discussed by Kuhn. As Kuhn notes, “Discovery commences with the awareness of anomaly, i.e. with the recognition that nature has somehow violated the paradigm-induced expectations that govern normal science. It then continues with a more or less exploration of the area of anomaly. And it closes only when the paradigm theory has been adjusted so that the anomalous has become expected.”\textsuperscript{41} Here then we see that value disputes—a characteristic of the nature of many social phenomena—violated the positivist paradigm induced expectations of the ability of such methods as cost-benefit analysis to solve certain policy problems.

The importance of this, in the broader sense of the revolution of the science of policy analysis, is that at times the anomalous necessitates a paradigm shift—in that the dominant paradigm is unable, without its own destruction, to adjust itself in order to make the anomalous expected. In policy analysis, due to the positivist paradigm’s ontological and epistemological tenets, the positivist paradigm for policy analysis is inherently unable to adjust itself to make issues regarding values expected. What is important to note here is that anomalies such as value disputes that the positivist paradigm is unable to make expected point to an inconsistency between the positivist paradigm, and their theories, and the nature of the subject of policy analysis. This


\textsuperscript{41} Kuhn, 52-53.
inconsistency between the dominant paradigm in policy analysis and the nature of social
phenomenon sparked the kinds of criticisms of the positivist paradigm that led to its
abandonment—the pivots on which scientific revolution turns.

Fay, in *Social Theory and Political Practice*, has also offered some of the criticisms
that are rooted in the discovery of anomalies, such as value disputes, under the positivist
paradigm for policy analysis. He criticizes positivist paradigms of policy analysis,
arguing that: (1) the limitations placed on policy analysis by the general positivist
paradigm reduces the task of policy analysts to simply providing means to a given end;
(2) that the idea of positivist policy analysis is incoherent; (3) that the positivist paradigm
not only denies a democratic process of decision-making, but in that it does so, (4) it
constitutes an ideology rooted in the values of modern industrial society and the
dominating powers, which undermines the positivist’s claim that their analysis is non-
ideological. Although Fay offers four arguments, he notes that the first argument is more
a qualification upon the positivist conception of policy analysis, and not necessarily an
argument against its coherence.

1. Values are within Limits of Positivist
Policy Analysis

Fay’s first argument is that the intent of positivist policy analysts to limit their field of
inquiry to physical objects, first results in limiting their task to simply providing means to
a given end. He argues that policy scientists, also referred to as positivist policy analysts,

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42 Such authors as Dvora Yanow, Deborah Stone, Frank Fischer, John Forester,
Martin Rein, M.E. Hawkesworth, Anne Larason Schneider, Rosemarie Tong, and Helen
Ingram have also discussed criticisms similar to Fay’s.

43 Fay, 51.
seek to maintain the fact-value dichotomy by only concerning themselves with the task of determining the ‘best’ means to a given end. As he explains:

The policy scientist cannot make all of the necessary decisions, for...any conception of the scientisation of politics must take account of the distinction between fact and value. This has been done by drawing another distinction between means and ends, the idea being the simple one that the choice of the ends to be pursued is thought to be a choice requiring a value judgment, but that the question as to the best means to a prescribed end is thought to be a factual question and therefore decidable scientifically. Thus, it is that the policy scientist is thought to be competent only in deciding the ‘best means’, which is to say that the social policies he recommends are those which are instrumental to achieving certain posited ends.

Thus, by only being concerned with the issue of determining the ‘best means’ to a given end, it is concluded that policy scientists effectively steer clear of issues concerning values when they are not reducible to physical objects.

Yet, as Fay argues, this task of determining the ‘best’ means to a given end requires a standard to which one can measure various means. In the policy sciences, this standard is often the criterion of efficiency. And, as Fay continues, “The concept of efficiency alone cannot provide an adequate standard in terms of which objective decisions can be made, for the concept of efficiency is a purely formal term signifying the ratio of amount of work performed to the total energy expended, and as such it can only have content, and therefore practical meaning, when one provides another standard in terms of which work and energy can be identified and measured.”

This implies that in deciding the ‘best means’, the policy analyst must still address value claims, for determining the ‘best means’ to a given end entails one to ask and the analyst to answer “efficient in terms of

\[\text{Ibid., 49.}\]

\[\text{Ibid., 50.}\]
Thus, Fay concludes that limiting the task of policy analysis to determining the 'best' means does not sufficiently insulate the task of the policy analyst from issues of values, for even when they concern themselves only with determining the 'best' or most efficient means to a given end, this task presupposes a value judgment that the analyst must make.

It is important to keep in mind that this argument, according to Fay, does not necessarily show the incoherence of positivist policy analysis, it instead argues that the framework of positivist policy analysis presupposes notions of values even when set at the sole task of considering the 'best' means to a given end. As Fay admits, "All my argument demonstrates is that the value-framework within which the policy scientist operates is more extensive than at first supposed – for it now includes standards of judgment as well as goals." And, as he continues, "within the admittedly more constricted region defined by this framework, however, the policy scientist can practice his trade." One may claim that the task of the policy scientist, within its limited framework, now becomes the task of simply providing means to a given end. The matter of determining which means is 'best' can be left to the decision-maker(s). Thus, by only providing means, it is assumed that the policy scientist can still maintain a fact-value dichotomy, but as Fay continues to argue, the positivist analyst must still obtain

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid., 51.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.
some standard of judgment even when confining policy analysis to questions about means.

2. Incoherence of Positivist Paradigm

for Policy Analysis

Yet, as Fay continues to argue, "the argument against the idea of scientifically selecting the best means is related to the relativity of ends and means, and so in this way: all policy scientists are willing to admit that the ends of action reflect the values of the person who chooses this end, but they maintain that the means to this end are all value-neutral, and that their worth is to be decided solely in terms of their instrumental value of their contribution to the achievement to the given end." And, since there is no clear distinction between means and ends, for depending on the point of view, any means can be understood as an end, "If any particular course of action can be either a 'means' or an end, then it must be the case that even so-called 'means' reflect the values and life commitments of the person who supports it, since this means is itself an end from another perspective."

As Fay continues to explain, means are political proposals, and "All political proposals, no matter how instrumental, will alter and shape the personal relations of at least some of the members of a society, and will reflect the relative welfare of various classes of people; as such they embody moral notions as to what is permissible, just, or right in human affairs. They are a species of moral statements." Thus, the

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50 Ibid., 51-52.
51 Ibid., 52.
52 Ibid.
determination of means entail values, and this then makes the idea of a value-neutral analysis incoherent, for “attempts at bracketing values away from social policies by making them a part of the framework within which the policy scientist must operate would result, in the last analysis, in making it impossible for the policy scientist to propose anything.”^53

Authors such as Yanow, Stone, and Fischer, have all argued similarly that inquiry into determining means requires the analyst to address value claims that entail various values, interpretations, and meanings. These kinds of criticisms are rooted in the understanding that the objects of inquiry in policy analysis are necessarily value-laden, thus attempting to make the task of policy analysis value-neutral by attempting to simply provide means, results in an inconsistency between the theory of policy analysis and the nature of object of policy analysis. In this sense, it can be concluded that positivist theories of policy analysis are externally incoherent. The three theories representing the three perspectives of the hermeneutic critique—those of Yanow, Stone, and Fischer—and of postpositivist theories in general, specifically attempt to address this failing in positivist theories of policy analysis when formulating their own theories.

3. Denial of Democratic Process of Decision-Making

Third, Fay argues that even if it was given “that a policy scientist could impartially determine the most efficient means to a given end’, his argument regarding the incoherence of a value-neutral policy science is still applicable, for engaging ‘in this type of political decision-making itself betrays a certain conception of the purposes and needs

^53 Ibid., 53.
of men which the political sphere is supposed to satisfy, and it therefore incorporates certain values. This argument speaks specifically of the positivist paradigm’s failure in recognizing the importance of a democratic process within the process of political decision-making, and can be understood as a consequence of positivist theories’ attempts to remain value-neutral. As Fay continues to explain, the positivist conception of political decision-making, also referred to as technocratic decision-making, speaks against the notion of political decision-making derived from the Aristotelian conception of politics in which members of the society come together in order to “participate in the process of determining the conditions of their lives.”

This Aristotelian conception of politics, unlike what has been referred to as the positivist’s technocratic notion of politics, “emphasises [sic] the social character of men’s self consciousness, claiming that the idea men have of themselves, of what is appropriate, right, and fitting, of what their abilities and capacities are, of what they are worth and what they ought to value and aspire towards – all of these ideas which comprise men’s images of themselves are a function of the social world in which they live.” In that positivist theories of policy analysis deny this Aristotelian conception of politics, they deny alternative sets of interpretations or values access to the decision-making process. They assume that all men hold or ought to hold the same values and the same conceptions of themselves. Thus, the criticism that positivist theories of policy analysis deny democratic processes of decision-making points to the failure of positivist theories to

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54 Ibid.
55 Ibid., 54.
56 Ibid., 54-55.
recognize that people do not share the same values and conceptions of themselves. By assuming that people do, the analysis not only reflects a certain set of values and conceptions that people have of themselves, which goes against their value-neutral notion of policy analysis, but the resulting analysis is also ill informed.

4. Positivist’s Paradigm for Policy Analysis

Presupposes Ideology

Fourth, Fay argues that “the positivist paradigm is one that claims that it is non-ideological, i.e. it claims to be different from all other approaches to understanding human behavior, social institutions and history in that it is value-neutral, that its truth neither presupposes nor entails certain judgments on the part of the social scientist in order for his statements to be true.”\(^{57}\) This claim is rooted in their epistemological tenet that the knowledge derived from positivist inquiry is ‘objective’ in regard to the truth of the statement. Yet, as Fay continues, the positivist paradigm, by being products of modern industrial society, by the values that they implicitly instill, and by the reification of the status quo social institutions and customs of society, reflects an ideology when their conclusions enter the political or social realm.\(^{58}\)

As Fay explains there are four features of positivist policy science that contribute to its ideological character. The first feature is that the “idea of policy science arose, and has been embedded, only in the context of industrial society.”\(^{59}\) Thus, positivist paradigms are rooted in a conception of social organization that “reinforces the policy

\(^{57}\) Ibid., 65.

\(^{58}\) Ibid., 58.

\(^{59}\) Ibid.
scientific ideal by its viewing people and their social relations in terms of their instrumental value, and its requiring control over social processes.⁶⁰

The second feature that contributes to the ideological character of positivist theories of policy analysis is that in seeking general laws of society in order to explain and control events, the positivist social scientist “views social relations as if they were processes which have a life of their own and which function in the way they do regardless of the wishes of the actors who engage in them.”⁶¹ This feature stems from the positivist’s assumption of the existence of general laws of social processes, an assumption in which the possibility of a value-neutral policy analysis is founded. “From this perspective,” as Fay continues, “it ought to be clear that the policy scientific approach gives to the social order—which is nothing more than the conventional activities of its members, together with their beliefs, expectations and desires—the qualities of an object which exists irrespective of the ideas of men.”⁶² Thus, the policy scientist by accepting these social arrangements as necessary, reify “either the basic structures of the society being studied, those fundamental institutions, customs, habits, and ideas which give to this society its distinctive identity (in the case of laws which are applicable to a given society), or certain recurring structural relationships (in the case of laws which purportedly apply to all forms of social organization, and which are instantiated in the society under question in some way).”⁶³

⁶⁰ Ibid.
⁶¹ Ibid., 59.
⁶² Ibid.
⁶³ Ibid., 59-60.
The third feature that contributes to the ideological character of positivist theories of policy analysis is in their assumption of "the twin assumptions that a scientific approach in political life can ensure a rational solution to political problems, and that only questions of means, or instrumental questions, are amenable to a scientific solution." Thus, criticism of the societal means, ends, and values, would be severely limited, thereby reinforcing the continued existence of such a society.

This feature stems from the assumption of the unity of science, and the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the fact-value dichotomy. The unity of science assumes that "the logic of scientific inquiry was the same for all fields. Whether natural phenomena or social phenomena were the objects of study, the method for acquiring valid knowledge and the requirements for explanation and prediction remained the same." Thus, it is assumed that the methods of science can be used to study and solve the problems of society; problems that are put in terms of quantifiable variables in accordance with the ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy.

The fourth feature that contributes to the ideological character of positivist theories of policy analysis is that in relegating issues of values to decision-maker(s), those who are understood as dominant members of the society within a society characterized by dominant-submissive social relations, the positivist paradigm "would almost inevitably be supportive of those who are dominant." These four features, as Fay argues, "Interact

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64 Ibid., 61.

65 Ibid.

66 Hawkesworth, 39.

67 Fay, 61-62.
with one another to support the *status quo* of an industrial society,"* and thereby represent the ideology of the dominant members of a modern industrial society.

Summary

In presenting a summary of the major tenets of the positivist paradigm, we saw how the ontological and epistemological tenets are employed to attempt to limit not only the problems that are to be considered by the policy analyst, but also the character of the solution and the methods of inquiry, to physical objects or those things reducible to physical objects. In essence, as noted by Kuhn, these are the effects of a paradigm. According to Kuhn, the scientific community acquires from paradigms not only "a criterion for choosing problems", but also rules "that limit both the nature of acceptable solutions and the steps by which they are to be obtained."*69

68 Ibid., 62.

69 Kuhn, 38.
CHAPTER III

THEORIES OF THE HERMENEUTIC
CRITIQUE

In response to the criticisms of positivist theories of policy analysis, theorists and practitioners formulated theories that are thought to address the shortcomings of positivist theories of policy analysis. These theories have been identified by most theorists and practitioners as postpositivist theories of policy analysis. According to Morçöl, “There are several theoretical streams [within postpositivism], some of which do not even use the title postpositivism.”¹ He has identified these theoretical streams according to the following categories: “contextuality and presupposition theories, hermeneutic critique, problem structuring and issue framing theories, methodological critique, and participatory policy analysis.”² He goes on to note that, “Arguably, among these theory streams, the hermeneutic critique presents the most coherent perspective.”³ For this reason, this chapter and this thesis as a whole, will focus on theories of the hermeneutic critique.⁴ Specifically, this chapter will focus on summarizing three specific theories

¹ Morçöl, 104.
² Ibid.
³ Ibid. These theories have been named for their use of hermeneutic methods.
⁴ As Morçöl notes, the “There is a series of commonly held postpositivist epistemological assumptions that are espoused in the policy analysis literature, but there
representing the three perspectives within the hermeneutic critique. As Morçôl explains regarding his category of the hermeneutic critique, "There are three distinguishable, but overlapping, theoretical perspectives within the hermeneutic critique: phenomenological/interpretive theory, discourse theory, and critical theory." As a representative of the phenomenological/interpretive perspective, this chapter will present a summary of Dvora Yanow’s interpretive theory. As a representative of the discourse perspective, this chapter will present a summary of Deborah Stone’s theory of policy analysis as craft, and as a representative of the critical perspective, this chapter will present a summary of Frank Fischer’s discursive theory. It is important to note here that although all three theories are distinct in several ways, they can be understood as sharing a similar paradigm—the general postpositivist paradigm.

The method of presenting a summary of each of these theories is to explicate each theory in terms of ontological, epistemological, and methodological tenets. In doing so, this chapter is meant not only to provide a starting point for the discussion in Chapter IV, is also considerable theoretical variation among post positivist theories" (Ibid., 104). This indeed makes mapping the geography of postpositivist theories very difficult. Yet, Morçôl provides a taxonomy of these theories, and this is the taxonomy that is used by this thesis.

5 Ibid., 106.

6 Fischer describes his framework as postempiricist. As Fischer notes in Reframing Policy Analysis, ‘postempiricism’ and ‘postpositivism’ are terms defined differently by various scholars, “[But] in [his] introductory chapter they should be read to refer generally to the search for an epistemology (or theory of knowledge) and a methodology that transcends the narrow focus on ‘objective’ empirical research that has been the goal of a ‘value-free’ positivist social science” (Fischer, 12, footnote # 10). According to this definition of postempiricism, Yanow’s theory and Stone’s theory can also be characterized as postempiricist, thus this paper will refer specifically to Fischer’s theory as a discursive theory in order to maintain the conceptual distinction between the three theories.
wherein strengths and weaknesses of how these theories address the shortcomings of positivist theories of policy analysis will be discussed, but also to introduce the reader to the foundational pillars for an alternative paradigm that is being offered, while the positivist paradigm for policy analysis is being rejected.

Interpretive/Phenomenological Theory:

Dvora Yanow's Interpretive Theory

In Conducting Interpretive Policy Analysis, Yanow provides what has been identified by Morçöl as an interpretive/phenomenological theory of policy analysis. Yanow's theory focuses on the importance of interpretation to the policy making process. Although Yanow does not specifically deny the importance or need for quantitative methods of policy analysis, through her theory, she addresses the criticism that positivist theories of policy analysis are impoverished because they fail to take into account the importance and place of value claims, which entail values, interpretations, and meanings within the process of policy analysis.

As mentioned earlier, positivist theories of policy analysis consider values, goals, and problems as given by the decision-maker(s) and are believed to be reducible to quantifiable measurements of physical objects. Thus, positivist theories of policy analysis see no need to address the notion of multiple interpretations of these elements of policy within the process of analysis. Yanow, on the other hand, views policy analysis as

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a meaning making process in which multiple interpretations of values, goals, problems, and means must be addressed. As Yanow notes, “As living requires sensemaking, [and] sensemaking entails interpretations, so too does policy analysis.”

1. Ontology

Ontologically, Yanow’s interpretive paradigm denies the positivist’s ontological tenet of the fact-value dichotomy. Although Yanow assumes that there are in general two categories of things: physical objects and value claims; yet she denies that only physical objects can yield knowledge. According to Yanow, value claims can also yield knowledge. Thus, Yanow also denies the positivist's distinction that physical objects are the sole appropriate objects for inquiry, and that value claims are not appropriate objects for inquiry.

According to Yanow’s theory, cultural objects can be further divided into two subcategories: human artifacts and communities of meaning. From human artifacts and communities of meaning, one can derive value claims that can yield knowledge. As Yanow explains, “human meanings, values, beliefs, and feelings are embodied in and transmitted through the artifacts of human creation, such as language, dress, patterns of action and interaction, written texts, sculpture.” And as Yanow continues, according to hermeneutics, “Human meaning [is] projected into the full range of human artifacts (language, music, art, literature, architecture, acts and interactions, physical objects, and so on) by their creators, and these artifacts could be studied to gain knowledge of those meanings using the same analytic methods that had been developed to understand biblical

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8 Ibid., 5.

9 Ibid. 8.
texts." In addition, according to Yanow, various communities of meaning hold various interpretations, meanings, values, beliefs, and feelings, and these communities of meaning can be studied with hermeneutic methods to reveal the various interpretations, meanings, values, beliefs, and feelings that they hold. Thus, according to Yanow’s interpretive theory, cultural objects (human artifacts and communities of meaning) can be studied to yield value claims—interpretations, meanings and values—that can yield knowledge.

According to Yanow, there are “at least three communities of meaning in any policy situation: policymakers, implementing agency personnel, and affected citizens or clients.” Yet, as Yanow notes, identifying communities of meaning may be more complicated than simply identifying these three communities, for:

We know from implementation and organizational studies that agencies may contain any number of internal communities of meaning: directors, managers or administrators, groups of professionals, lower-level employees, and street level bureaucrats. And from community studies we know that communities and neighborhood have internal divisions.... Moreover, there are many other policy-relevant groups—community residents, cognate and competing agencies and professionals, interest groups, potential clients, unheard or silent voices; which ones are of analytic and decision-making concern will depend on the specific policy issue in question—each one of which may interpret the policy differently from legislators’ intent (if that can even be established as a single meaning). As we will see later on, identifying these communities of meaning comprises one of the first two steps in conducting an interpretive policy analysis.

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10 Ibid., 6-7.

11 Ibid., 10. These ‘communities of meanings’ are also been referred to as stakeholders in various policy analysis literature.

12 Ibid., 10-11.
2. Epistemology

a) Denial of Epistemological Tenet of the Fact-Value Dichotomy

Epistemologically, Yanow denies the positivist’s epistemological tenet of the fact-value dichotomy. By denying the distinctions between positivist’s characterizations of physical objects and value claims as knowable and not knowable respectively, Yanow denies that only physical objects can yield knowledge. Her theory as a whole stands as a testimonial to the notion that value claims can also yield knowledge. Thus, the denial of the epistemological tenet of the fact-value dichotomy leads Yanow to consider not only physical objects, but also value claims—which entail interpretations, meanings, and values—as appropriate objects of inquiry.

b) Characteristics of Knowledge

In addition, Yanow’s interpretive theory holds that differing communities of meaning can associate different interpretations, meanings, values, and feelings to both physical objects and value claims. These communities of meaning suggest the epistemological tenet that value claims are socially constructed. Given the constructivist epistemological assumption regarding how we come to know the world around us, and how we come to communicate with each other, Yanow explains how this process of coming to know the world, and coming to understand those within it, leads to the creation of communities of meaning. As Yanow explains:

Through a process of interaction, members of a community—whether a community of scientists or environmentalists or some other group—come to use the same or similar cognitive mechanisms, engage in the same or similar acts, and use the same or similar language to talk about thought and action. Group processes reinforce these, often promoting internal cohesion as an identity marker with respect to other communities...Such communities may be fluid, changing
from issue to issue (although often with some overlap, e.g., according to positions along a spectrum of political or religious ideology).\textsuperscript{13}

This tenet entails that the knowledge is a construct; a construct that reflects a certain framework in which policy issues are interpreted, "an interpretive framework within which policy-related artifacts makes sense."\textsuperscript{12} Here Yanow argues that various interpretations of a policy artifact, event, or situation, held by the various communities of meaning, imply a certain framework that makes sense of the various interpretations. As Yanow explains, "A ‘frame’—with its metaphoric origins in a picture frame, the photographer’s framing of a scene through the view finder, the skeletal frame of a house under construction—sets up an interpretive framework within which policy-related artifacts make sense."\textsuperscript{15}

These frames not only make sense of the various interpretations held by the various communities of meaning, but they also "direct attention toward some elements [of a policy issue] while simultaneously diverting attention from other elements," they "entail courses of action" and they "are often expressed through language."\textsuperscript{16} As we will see, revealing the underlying framework of the interpretations of a policy artifact, event, or situation, which involves the explication of various meanings and values held by the various communities of meaning, in general becomes a major task of Yanow’s interpretive analysis. As Yanow notes, "The central question, then, for interpretive

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 7-8

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 11.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.; Ibid., 12; Ibid., 11-12.
policy analysts is, How is the policy issue being framed by the various parties to the debate [the various communities of meaning significant to the policy issue]."^{17} Thus, "the role of the interpretive policy analyst is to map the ‘architecture’ of debate relative to the policy issue under investigation, by identifying the language and its entailments (understandings, actions, meanings) used by different interpretive communities in their framing of the issue."^{18} Not only does revealing the underlying framework lead to understanding the meanings, values, beliefs, and emotions of the various communities of meaning, it also leads to understanding the conflicts between the various communities of meaning.\footnote{Ibid.}

In addition, Yanow’s theory of policy analysis assumes that knowledge has a contextual nature, and is subject to change and is not universally held. As Yanow notes regarding the knowledge derived from language, objects, and acts, “It is important to emphasize the contextual nature of such knowledge. Although symbolic meanings need not necessarily be ‘local’ meanings in a geographic sense, they are ‘local’ in a policy issue sense. It is also important to note that knowledge it is only provisional knowledge, subject to change as circumstances and individuals change or as our (mis)interpretations are corrected, this lack of universality and eternity stands in marked contrast to positivist notions of the certainty of knowledge.”^{19}

\footnote{Ibid., 12-13.}

\footnote{As we will see later on, Yanow’s notion of frame is equivalent to Stone’s notion of ideas, and Fischer’s notion of ideology.}

\footnote{Ibid., 17.}
It is important to note here that although Yanow holds that knowledge is characterized by its contextual nature, is subject to change, and is not universally held, she also holds that the knowledge gained by policy analysts can be objective, in regard to the truth of the statement, when the knowledge claim is about the second-level interpretation of interpretations made by the policy analyst within his or her report. In other words, the analyst's interpretation of the interpretations held by the various communities of meaning may be determined to be objectively true or false, based on how accurately the analyst's interpretations actually reflect the interpretations held by the communities of meaning.

c) Tenet of Quasi-Causal Model of Explanation

A fourth epistemological tenet of Yanow's interpretive paradigm is that knowledge of a social phenomenon is centered around deriving knowledge from value claims; from the intentions, desires, emotions, values, and meanings of the actors associated with that event. This tenet focuses on the relevance of a quasi-causal model of explanation. Instead of providing an explanation of social phenomenon in the deductive-nomological form or the form of probabilistic law, where a certain quantifiable variable is correlated with another quantifiable variable by virtue of a general law, the interpretive paradigm assumes that the correlation between two variables, in regard to a social phenomenon, is a result of the interpretations, meanings, values, and intentions of those involved in the act, and in interpreting the act as something meaningful.²¹

²¹ Fay provides an extensive analysis and explanation of the scientific causal model of explanation and the interpretive quasi-causal model of explanation (Fay, 21-85 passim). Fay refers to the general law of nature in scientific causal explanations and the desires,
In Yanow’s paradigm, the tenet regarding the quasi-causal model of explanation is apparent in her discussion of narrative analysis; one of the primary methods of inquiry used by interpretive theories. She explains how “narratives relate things that are understood to have happened.” By relating things that are understood to have happened, the beliefs and values held by the narrator, and the meanings one associates with the event or the artifacts of that event are revealed, thus allowing for an explanation that makes use of interpretations and meanings; an explanation that is not in the mode of scientific causal explanations.

As Yanow notes, “An interpretive approach to policy analysis, then, is one that focuses on the meanings of policies, on the values, feelings, or beliefs they express, and on the process by which those meanings are communicated to and ‘read’ by various audiences.” Thus, Yanow’s interpretive paradigm primarily focuses on discovering the quasi-causal explanations of social events, while also allowing for the discovery of scientific causal explanations. This focus is reflected in Yanow’s methodological focus of understanding the meanings and values behind the rationale for actions that constitute social events and produce human artifacts. Thus, according to Yanow’s interpretive theory of policy analysis, although knowledge of physical objects and value claims are both relevant to the analysis of policy, Yanow holds that one of the main objectives of inquiry is to discover the value claims that can yield knowledge.

\[\text{References}\]

22 Yanow, 58.

23 Ibid., 14.
This is significantly different from scientific modes of explanation that positivist theories of policy analysis rely upon. Scientific modes of explanation only provide an explanation of how one variable may be correlated to another variable, and from this they assume that the mechanisms that correlate these variables are universal laws. This also leads positivist theories of policy analysis to assume a deterministic conception of people ruled by universal laws, and leads them to hope for the possibility of social control or engineering in which variables are manipulated to bring about a certain desired end.

Quasi-causal explanations do not assume that universal laws can explain correlations among variables. Instead, they provide explanations rooted in various interpretations, meanings, values, and feelings that are associated with these variables. In this sense, the actions of people are not determined by social laws, but more so by their beliefs. Thus, although social engineering may still be possible, the possibility is not rooted in the manipulation of physical objects, but more so, in the manipulation of value claims—which entail various values, interpretations, meanings, and feelings—that are associated with these variables.

3. Methodology
   a) Denial of the Positivist's Tenet of the Unity of Science

Entailed by her ontological and epistemological tenets, Yanow provides several methodological tenets that comprise a method for what she refers to as an interpretive theory of policy analysis; a method for acquiring propositions of knowledge that are rooted in value claims, and are derived from both physical objects—mainly human
artifacts—and value claims that entail various values, interpretations, and meanings that are held by various communities of meaning.

Given the distinctiveness of Yanow's interpretive paradigm from those of the positivist paradigm, the first methodological tenet held by her theory is the denial of the positivist's tenet of the unity of science. As the whole of Yanow's methodology argues, it is false to claim that the logic of scientific inquiry based on natural science applies universally to all fields regardless of the object in question; that the scientific method of inquiry is applicable in the study of physical objects that are natural, as well as cultural objects, such as human artifacts and communities of meaning, and value claims through the reduction of cultural objects to their physical components, or the reduction of value claims to variables that can be quantitatively measured.

b) Tenet of Situated Knower

Second, Yanow's interpretive paradigm holds that policy analysts, like communities of meaning, are situated knowers. As Yanow notes regarding her interpretive theory of policy analysis, it is assumed that:

it is not possible for an analyst to stand outside of the policy issue being studied, free of its values and meanings and of the analyst's own values, beliefs, and feelings. The argument assumes that knowledge is acquired through interpretation, which necessarily is 'subjective': it reflects the education, experience, training, as well as the individual, familial, and communal background, of the 'subject' making the analysis. Not only analysts, but also all actors in a policy situation (as with other aspects of the social world), interpret issue data as they seek to make sense of the policy.\(^{24}\)

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\(^{24}\) Ibid., 6. As noted by Rudner, the word 'objective' "has been used, in fact, to apply to at least four different things: (1) the verisimilitude of ideas, i.e., the replicalike character of mental imagery, (2) the truth of statements, (3) the reliability of methodologies, and (4) the psychological disposition of an investigator to have or believe, or employ the kinds of ideas, statements, or methodologies mentioned under 1, 2, or 3" (Rudner, 40-41). These various distinctive referents to the word 'objective' is also applicable to its polar opposite 'subjective.' Yanow's use of the word 'subjective' refers
The implication of Yanow’s tenet that all policy analysts are situated knowers is that no matter how careful an analyst may believe he or she is being in presenting an objective or detached analysis of a particular policy and/or policy situation, he or she will not be able to provide a completely detached analysis; the analysis will always be embedded within the analyst’s own values, beliefs, and feelings.

Methodologically, this tenet helps the analyst keep in mind not only the nature of the process of analysis but also that of the final product. It implies various levels of interpretation regarding the analysis of policy, and the reading of the analysis: the first-level interpretation, the second-level interpretation of interpretations made by the policy analyst within his or her report, and the third-level interpretation of the interpretations made by the reader of the analyst’s reports.25

c) Mapping Architecture of Policy Discourse

(1) Steps I and II: Identifying Communities of Meanings and Artifacts

Third, the interpretive method holds that the first “role of the policy analyst is to map the ‘architecture’ of debate that is relevant to the policy issue under investigation by identifying the language and its entailments (understandings, actions, meanings) used by different interpretive communities in their framing of the issue.”26 The mapping of the architecture of the policy relevant issue is done in several steps, and each of these steps to the psychological disposition of an investigator to have or believe, or employ the kinds of ideas, statements, or methodologies under 1, 2, or 3.

25 Yanow, 18.

26 Ibid., 12-13.
constitute the steps of the interpretive method of policy analysis. As Yanow explains, "The first two steps in interpretive policy analysis are to identify the artifacts that are significant carriers of meaning for the interpretive communities relative to a given policy issue, and to identify those communities relevant to the policy issue that create or interpret these artifacts and meanings." This amounts to the identification of the relevant cultural objects, such as human artifacts and communities of meaning, in regards to the policy issue.

According to Yanow, these two steps of identifying artifacts and communities of meaning are carried out by: (1) conducting interviews with individuals belonging to the communities of meaning, (2) observing the communities of meaning, and (3) analyzing documents or human artifacts produced by communities of meaning that are relevant to the policy issue. As Yanow notes, "When used together, these three methods are often referred to as participant observation or ethnography."

In addition, it is important to note here that identifying the various communities of meaning, and the various artifacts of meaning, is focused around accessing local knowledge. This is an important aspect of interpretive analysis, for it brings to the forefront the epistemological tenet of multiple perspectives or multiple ways of knowing. As Yanow states, "Interpretive analysts develop and practice an expertise in the methodical process of accessing local knowledge and mapping the architecture of policy

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27 Ibid., 20.
28 Ibid., 31.
29 Ibid.
debates, but they treat policy, agency, and community members—the actors in the situation—as the substantive experts of their own domain.\textsuperscript{30}

By doing so, Yanow's interpretive paradigm also undermines the traditional positivist notion of the analyst as a privileged knower, or technical expert in a scientific sense, and provides for a greater understanding of the policy situation—an understanding of policy situations from various perspectives that entail various interpretations, meanings, values, and feelings. Thus, Yanow's interpretive paradigm provides a more democratic process of policy analysis compared to traditional positivist theories of policy analysis. As Yanow notes:

This approach is more democratic than traditional policy analytic approaches...in two senses. Interpretive analysis depends on the policy analyst's skills as a translator-story teller, not as a technocratic expert, thereby opening up the conversation to 'lay' people (who are often the ones affected by the policy issue) and short-circuiting the contemporary societal value placed on science and its technical language. It is also democratic in that it relies on the presence of multiple stories, told from the points of view, ideally, all policy-relevant actors, and not only on the stories (and thereby values) of experts, policymakers, or other elites.\textsuperscript{31}

It is also important to note here that although Yanow's theory does not assume a traditional positivist notion of a privileged, technocratic policy analyst trained in the methods of scientific inquiry, her theory does assume a certain kind of policy analyst who is a privileged expert—in listening and in interpreting. By understanding the interpretive policy analyst as an expert translator-storyteller trained in hermeneutic techniques gives the analyst a privileged position above their subjects of inquiry. Yet, because her method does entail the duty of the analyst to map, as accurately as possible the various voices

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 19.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 91.
within a policy issue, her theory still presents a more democratic process of decision-making.

(2) Step III: Explicating Interpretations, Meanings and Values

The third step in mapping the architecture of the relevant policy issue is “to identify the communities’ ‘discourses’: how they talk and act with respect to the issue. The goal of this step is to be able to say something about the meanings—the values, beliefs, feelings—that are important to each policy relevant community, as well as to extend the analysis of the artifacts.” This task is specifically oriented towards discovering propositional statements of knowledge that are rooted in value claims that entail various values, interpretations, and meanings associated with cultural objects.

In mapping the policy-relevant communities’ discourses, the analyst “identif[ies] the ‘discourse’: the specific meanings being communicated through specific artifacts and their entailments (in thought, speech, and act)” and then “identif[ies] the points of conflict and their conceptual sources (affective, cognitive, and/or moral) that reflect different interpretations by different communities.” According to Yanow, the identification of the discourse is done through the analysis of symbolic language, metaphor analysis, category analysis, narrative analysis, the analysis of symbolic objects such as built spaces and their ‘props’ and documents, and the analysis of symbolic acts, such as rituals and myths.

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32 Ibid., 20.

33 Ibid., 22, Table 1.1.
(3) Step IV: Intervention

A possible second role of the analyst, and a possible fourth step, of Yanow’s interpretive method for policy analysis constitutes what she refers to as intervention; but as she notes, this role need not be undertaken by an interpretive analyst, for a researcher might stop before this point. However, if the analyst chooses to take on this role and proceed with intervention, Yanow identifies three ways of doing so. The analyst may (1) “show implications of different meanings/interpretations for policy formulations and/or action,” (2) “show that differences [or conflicts in meaning] reflect different ways of seeing [epistemological and ethical differences],” or (3) “negotiate/mediate/intervene in some other form to bridge differences (e.g., suggest reformulation or reframing [of policy issues]).”

d) Defining Purpose of Policy Analysis

These final possible steps of interpretive policy analysis, and the status of their necessity, imply a final methodological tenet of interpretive policy analysis—a tenet regarding the role of the policy analyst and the definition of policy analysis. Traditional positivist policy analysis has been generally understood as “choosing the ‘best’ policy alternative according to an explicit decision rule.” Thus, the information provided by the policy analyst is the decision itself that the decision-maker(s) is to make. In effect, the analysis entails a choice for the decision-maker(s).

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34 Ibid., 20.
35 Ibid. 22, Table 1.1.
36 Jenkins-Smith, 11.
In contrast, the form of advice provided by Yanow’s interpretive analysis does not entail a choice for the decision-maker(s). The tenet regarding the role of the analyst for the interpretive method is that the analyst is “a translator, bringing other interpretive communities’ stories to her employing policymaker, agency, or community group, helping each to understand the stories of the others. The task of policy analysis in this view is to identify and to explain ‘the diverse dimensions of debate pertinent to particular policy questions’ (Hawkesworth, 1988, p.94), enabling a more informed policy deliberation and choice.” In this sense, the advice provided by the policy analyst is understood not as a recommendation as to a specific course of action, but is instead understood as information that enables the decision-maker(s) to deliberate and choose a course of action given the information provided by the analysis—in essence the policy analysis provides the decision-maker(s) with information that he or she may need to make an adequately informed decision.

This conception of policy analysis is markedly different from positivist policy analysis’s conception of analysis that is likened to a puzzle, which entails the possibility of a solution. Yanow’s theory, on the other hand, assumes that the problems of policy analysis are not necessarily puzzles because they do not necessarily entail solutions. Although decisions can be made based on the information provided by interpretive analysts, these decisions are not solutions; they do not necessarily solve the problems presented by the policy issue. The decisions instead are provisional courses of action.

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37 Yanow, 90.
Discourse Theory: Deborah Stone’s

Analysis as Craft Theory

In *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*, Stone, like Yanow, offers a theory of policy analysis based on tenets regarding the value-ladenness of policy analysis. Stone suggests that the terms one uses to define goals, problems, and solutions are ambiguous, for they have multiple possible interpretations—interpretations that are rooted in different ways people see and interpret the world—and this in effect is what characterizes their political and value-laden nature. According to Stone, analysis is not only a strategically constructed argument for seeing the world a certain way, but in that it is so, it is also a tool for the construction of reality towards a certain end.\(^{38}\) Thus, it influences and is influenced by the social construction of reality.

In this sense, Stone’s conception of a policy analyst as one who strategically constructs arguments for seeing the world a certain way, is in tune with the conception of an analyst as an advocate, for the analyst’s argument supports one perspective, one set of interpretations, meanings, and values, among the various perspectives within a policy discourse. As Stone notes, “Sharpening your analytic skills will definitely make you a more effective advocate, so the tools of *Policy Paradox* are meant to help you develop both your analyst and your advocate selves.”\(^{39}\)

In addition, according to Stone, she uses the framework of goals, problems, and solutions “because it expresses a logic of problem solving that is widespread in the policy analysis literature and because it parallels the [positivist] models of rational decision-

\(^{38}\) Stone, 11.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 385.
making and the policy-making process. What becomes apparent is that Stone’s use of this specific framework also illustrates that theories of policy analysis that use frameworks reflecting traditional positivist models of rational decision-making, such as cost-benefit analysis and risk-benefit analysis, fail to recognize the ambiguous— and thus political and value-laden nature— of each of these three elements. For according to Stone, these seemingly straightforward elements of policy analysis contain a myriad of political complexities that ensue given the nature of society as a polis, and to deny their inherent value-laden and ambiguous nature results in an incoherent theory of policy analysis.

1. Ontology

Ontologically, Stone’s paradigm for policy analysis, like Yanow’s, denies the ontological tenet of the fact-value dichotomy. She denies that only physical objects are the appropriate objects for knowledge. According to Stone, we know all objects through categories of thought; categories of thought which are not physical. As she explains:

Categories are human mental constructs in a world that has only continua. They are intellectual boundaries we put on the world in order to help us apprehend it and live in an orderly way. That is the meaning of the phrase ‘social construction of reality’ and the school of thought it denotes—not that there is no reality apart from social meanings, but that we can know reality only by categorizing it, naming it, and giving it meaning.

Thus, unlike Yanow, Stone believes that all knowledge, although some are derived from physical objects, can only be knowledge when their value claims are

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40 Ibid., 12.

41 The polis is Stone’s reference to an “essential political society” (Ibid., 18).

42 Ibid., 378.
explicated, which entail the explication of interpretations, meanings, and values. As Stone notes, "facts do not exist independent of interpretive lenses, and they come clothed in words and numbers. Even the simple act of naming an object places it in a class and suggests that it is like something and unlike others." Thus, knowledge claims are always only known to us as propositional statements rooted in value claims that entail various values, interpretations, and meanings.

Within her theory of policy analysis, Stone makes three general distinctions within the category of thought that are assumed to be important to policy analysis—the categories of problems, goals, and solutions. As we shall see later on, she provides methods for gaining knowledge, which are rooted in value claims, of each of these three categories based on their ambiguous and therefore, value-laden nature.

2. Epistemology

a) Denial of the Epistemological Tenet

Of the Fact-Value Dichotomy

Stone, like Yanow, also rejects the epistemological tenet of the fact-value dichotomy, assuming that the appropriate objects of inquiry for policy analysis are value claims. She notes that policy analysis is not concerned with facts (the knowledge gained and supported by physical objects), but instead by value claims (the various interpretations, meanings, and values) espoused within differing interpretations of goals, problems, and solutions that are dependant upon contextual influences of the mind, history, rhetoric, and power. As Stone explains, "There are to be sure, objective facts underlying all [policy relevant] situations. The fetus could probably be described as consisting of certain kinds

\[43\] Ibid., 311.
of tissues, with determinable weight, chemical composition, and anatomical formation. But these kinds of facts are simply not the ones that matter in politics. What people care about are interpretations of personhood, shootings, wars, and economies. What communities decide about when they make policy is meaning, not matter. And [natural] science cannot settle questions of [contemporary political or social] meaning.\(^{44}\)

b) Characteristics of Knowledge

In addition, like Yanow, Stone holds a constructive notion of knowledge. According to Stone, given that society exists as a polis, information or knowledge is dependent on interpretation and is an object of strategic manipulation. This tenet points to the tenet, like Yanow’s conception of a framework that makes sense of human artifacts, that underlining our knowledge is a background of interpretations that make sense of the knowledge we have. As Stone notes, “Each idea is an argument, or more accurately a collection of arguments in favor of a different way of seeing the world. Every chapter \[^{45}\] of Policy Paradox is devoted to showing how there are multiple understandings of what appears to be a single concept, how these understandings are created, and how they are manipulated as part of political strategy.”

Also, according to Stone, “Much of what we ‘know’ is what we believe to be true. And what we believe about information depends on who tells us (source) and how it is presented (the medium, the choice of language, the context).”\(^{46}\) Thus, Stone concludes not only that knowledge is never complete nor is it ever fully and equally distributed,

\(^{44}\) Ibid., 379.

\(^{45}\) Ibid., 11.

\(^{46}\) Ibid., 28.
because the information we base our knowledge upon is never fully complete nor equally distributed,\textsuperscript{47} but it is also ‘subjective’ in regard to the truth of statements.\textsuperscript{48}

c) Tenet of Quasi-Causal Modes of Explanation

Finally, although Stone does not refer specifically to quasi-causal modes of explanation, her theory as a whole, like Yanow’s, stands as a testimonial to the importance of quasi-causal modes of explanation. As we will see in the following section, one of Stone’s major methodological tenets is based on the notion of deconstructing alternative policy discourses. The act of doing so, according to Stone, is focused around explicating the various interpretations of goals, problems, and solutions, along with the various value claims, which entail various meanings and values that are associated with various interpretations.

One example of this is the act of deconstructing narratives. As Stone explains, narratives “provide explanations of how the world works.”\textsuperscript{49} Although narratives themselves are quasi-causal explanations, the result of deconstructing narratives is also a quasi-causal explanation of why various policy advocates understand the policy problem in the way that they do, and why they support one policy alternative in respect to another. Thus, Stone’s theory, like Yanow’s, stresses the importance of quasi-causal modes of explanation.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 29.

\textsuperscript{48} Rudner, 40-41.

\textsuperscript{49} Stone, 137.
3. Methodology

a) Tenet of Situated Knower

Stone’s theory of policy analysis, like Yanow’s, also assumes that the subject of knowledge is situated within his or her own framework of interpretations, meanings, and values. As mentioned above in the section on Stone’s characteristics of knowledge, Stone believes that our knowledge is based on ideas that are a collection of arguments on how one sees the world. These ideas are the underlying frames for what we know, and as Stone continues to explain, much of what we know is based on what we believe to be true, and what we believe to be true is based primarily on our sources of information and mediums of information. Thus, as subjects of knowledge, we are embedded within a framework of ideas, which are gathered from various sources through various mediums of exchange. Thus, like Yanow, Stone concludes that the product of analysis also entails a framework of meanings, interpretations, and values that must be analyzed, or as Stone may put it, deconstructed.

b) Ambiguity and Value-Ladenness of Goals

Stone holds three major methodological tenets. The first is the tenet that goals, a category of thought, are by nature ambiguous and thus, value-laden and political. In “Part II” of Policy Paradox, Stone addresses the ambiguous nature of goals in her analysis of equity, efficiency, security, liberty, and community ‘goals’. According to Stone, the notion of a goal, also referred to as an objective or a value, “conveys the central tenet of modern policy analysis—namely, that policy is the rational attempt to
attain objectives,” and they are used not only to justify policy but also as a criterion for evaluation. As Stone notes, the unifying fact of the treatment of goals in positivist theories of policy analysis is that they “search for a single definition or single criterion that can offer a determinant rule for justification or evaluation.” However, as she argues, “None of these criteria in fact offers a simple or determinant rule. Each of them contains ambiguities and problems of interpretation that make them the object of political struggles.” These ambiguities are rooted in value claims that entail various interpretations, meanings, and values that are associated with the conception of goals.

For example, she explains how the notion of ‘equity’ can carry various meanings. She notes how the notions of ‘equity’ and ‘equality’ are conceptions of distribution, and they contain “three important dimensions: the recipients (who gets something?), the item (what is being distributed?), and the process (how is the distribution to be decided and carried out?).” As Stone continues, each of these dimensions present challenges to the positivist’s conception of a value-neutral policy analysis.

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50 Ibid., 37.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Stone uses the word ‘equality’ “to denote sameness and to signify the part of a distribution that contains uniformity – uniformity of slices, or of meals, or of voting power, for example”, and she uses ‘equity’ “to denote distributions regarded as fair, even though they contain both equalities and inequalities” (Ibid., 42). Cf. Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, Bk V.

55 Ibid.
The dimension of the recipient presents two challenges. The first is the challenge of how one is to define the membership within the class of recipients, and the second is a challenge to how society is internally divided, either horizontally or vertically or by group. To exemplify the first challenge, Stone offers the notion of citizenship. As Stone explains:

On the first thought, one might think a citizen [of the United States] is anyone born on American soil or born of American parents or legally naturalized. But once we think about the different purposes and policies for which we need a concept of citizenship, the definition becomes less obvious. When the right to vote is at issue, it is often believed that people should meet certain qualifications to be considered voting citizens. They should know how to read so that they can follow policy debates (literacy test); they should own property so that they 'have a stake in the system' (property qualification); or they should reside in the jurisdiction a certain length of time so that they 'understand the issue' (residency requirements).

The second challenge is exemplified by the two conceptions of equity in the field of economics, horizontal and vertical equity. Horizontal equity is defined as "equal treatment of people within the same rank" and vertical equity is defined as "unequal treatment of people in different ranks."

The second dimension of equity or equality, the dimension of the item, presents challenges of defining the item being distributed. These challenges entail defining boundaries of the item or defining the item’s value. As Stone illustrates:

56 Ibid., 43.
57 Ibid., 42.
58 Ibid., 43.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid., 45.
Student financial aid is an issue involving boundary challenges to the definition of the item. A few schools give aid strictly on the basis of students’ academic merit. But most distribute aid at least in part on the basis of students’ financial need. When a school considers financial need, it is looking at its financial aid—what it distributes—not as money in itself but as part of each student’s total assets. It then has to decide what to count as a student’s asset. Some schools look only at the student’s current earnings and savings. Others take a more global view and include parents’ earnings and savings. Law, medical, and business schools typically consider their students’ high potential future earnings as part of their assets, and tend to offer loans rather than outright scholarships, on the theory that their students can easily pay back loans out of their future earnings. Thus, within the issue of financial aid, we have at least four possible definitions of what is being distributed: aid as money itself, aid as part of a student’s assets, aid as part of a family’s assets, and aid as part of a student’s lifetime earning.\(^{61}\)

The third dimension of equity or equality, the dimension of process, presents challenges to the process of obtaining equity or equality. As Stone notes, “Process is important because our notion of fairness includes not only the end result but the sense of fair process by which the result occurred. Thus, if after hearing testimony in a criminal case, the jury flipped a coin to decide whether to convict, we would think the trial unfair even if it resulted in a decision we believed was in accord with the evidence. For many things in life—such as prize lottery, an election, or an athletic competition—we are quite willing to accept unequal results so long as we know that the process is fair.”\(^{62}\)

Thus, in assuming that goals, which are characterized in terms of values such as equity, efficiency, security, liberty, and community ‘goals,’ are consistent with a single definition or criterion, positivist theories not only deny the possibility of conflicting definitions, but in unquestionably accepting these definitions determined by the analyst or decision-maker(s), the analyst unquestionably supports a specific conception or

\(^{61}\) Ibid., 49-50.

\(^{62}\) Ibid., 51-52.
interpretation of these goals. By doing so, the positivist paradigm not only falsely
assumes that there are no ambiguities in the analysis of policy, but also supports and
reifies a set of values, interpretations, and meanings associated with only one perspective
among the various perspectives within the policy discourse.

c) Ambiguity and Value-Ladenness

of Problems

Stone’s second methodological tenet is that the notion of problems, another category
of thought belonging to the social realm, is inherently ambiguous and political, and thus,
value-laden and political. In “Part III” of Policy Paradox, Stone addresses the
ambiguous and political nature of problems in her analysis of the types of language used
for defining and portraying policy problems. According to Stone, positivist theories of
policy analysis define a problem as “a statement of a goal and the discrepancy between it
and the status quo.”63 However, in her analysis of how symbols and numbers are used,
and how causes, interests, and decisions are portrayed, Stone explains how “problem
definition is never simply a matter of defining goals, and measuring our distance from
them. It is rather the strategic representation of situations. Problem definition is a matter
of representation because every description of a situation is a portrayal from only one of
many points of view. Problem definition is strategic because groups, individuals, and
government agencies deliberately and consciously fashion portrayals to promote their
favorite course of action.”64

63 Ibid., 133.
64 Ibid.
According to Stone, (1) symbols, (2) numbers, (3) causes, (4) interests and (5) decisions all represent types of language used in portraying and defining policy problems; in creating quasi-causal explanations of problems. All five types of language used in portraying and defining problems are dependent upon various values and interpretations of meaning, thus they are ambiguous, and so political and value-laden.

As Stone explains about (1) symbols, there are “four aspects of symbolic representation [that] are especially important to the definition of problems”: (a) narrative stories, (b) synecdoches, (c) metaphors, (d) and ambiguity. As Stone continues to explain, (a) narratives “provide explanations of how the world works”; (b) “Synecdoches are figures of speech in which a part is used to represent a whole”; (c) metaphors is the comparison of two things as similar or alike; and (d) “Ambiguity, [is] the capacity to have multiple meanings”, as we saw with the examples regarding citizenship and student financial aide. All four aspects of symbolic representation denote the ambiguous, and thus, value-laden and political nature of symbols.

(1) Numbers, as Stone explains, “is about the language of counting”, and ‘Counting is at bottom metaphor-making, because to count requires making judgments about how things are like one another in important ways.” Thus, the uses of numbers, in the portrayal of problems, reflect various interpretations of how the numbers correlate to those things that are being counted.

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65 Ibid., 137.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid., 134.
In regards to (3) Causes, Stone notes that, “In the polis, causal stories are strategically crafted with symbols and numbers and then asserted by political actors who try to make their versions the basis of policy choices.” Thus, causes reflect quasi-causal explanations rooted in various interpretations of symbols and numbers.

Of (4) interests, Stone explains that, “The sides in politics are said to be ‘interests.’ They are groups that have a stake in an issue or are affected by it...Interests, in the language of politics, are the active side of effects, the result of people experiencing or imaging effects and attempting to influence them.” Thus, interests reflect various values, interpretations, and meanings that are associated with the various interests held by the various stakeholders.

In regard to (5) decisions, Stone explains that:

The hallmark of contemporary [positivist] policy analysis is its focus on rational methods of decision making. Problems are cast as a choice between alternative means for achieving a goal, and rationality means simply choosing the best means to attain a given goal.

In this approach, all policy problems become subspecies of a single metaproblem: how to make a decision that will attain a given goal. These models of decision are prescriptive rather than descriptive or predictive; they define policy problems as decisions, and they purport to show the best decision to solve a problem.

Thus, decisions also entail various values and interpretations of meaning, not only because choosing the ‘best’ means involves one to determine which value to use in order to measure which means is the ‘best’, or to provide a hierarchy of ‘best’ means, but also

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68 Ibid., 189.

69 Ibid., 210.

70 Ibid., 232.
because the understanding of the problem for which the decision is to provide a solution, also entails various values and interpretations of meaning.

d) Ambiguity and Value-Ladenness of Solutions

Stone’s third methodological tenet is that the notion of solutions is also by nature ambiguous, and thus, value-laden and political. In “Part IV,” Stone addresses the ambiguous nature of solutions, also referred to as policy strategies, or policy instruments. As Stone argues, “The means of tackling policy problems are often called policy instruments or policy solutions. These terms give the misleading impression that public polices create permanent mechanical fixes. Policy actions, though, are ongoing strategies for structuring relationships and coordinating behavior to achieve collective purpose.”

As Stone continues, solutions or policy instruments, are always about the use of power, about “getting people to do what they otherwise might not do” either through inducements, rules, the portrayal of facts, the use of rights talk, and/or the manipulation of power.

As Stone argues throughout this section, the choice and implementation of these policy instruments are subject to the struggles of politics, the struggles of a value-laden world. Thus, in determining a specific solution as the ‘best,’ positivist theories deny all other conceptions of solutions, along with the values that these differing conceptions encompass. Not only this, but in unquestionably accepting the solution recommended by

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71 Ibid., 261.

72 Ibid.
the analyst, one not only accepts a structure of power, but also a specific conception of human behavior, structural relationship, and values.

e) Denial of Positivist Tenet of Unity of Science

Another methodological tenet held by Stone's theory of policy analysis as craft is the tenet regarding a specific definition of policy analysis. This tenet entails the denial of the positivist’s tenet of the unity of science. According to Stone, policies contain ideas and “Each idea is an argument, or more accurately a collection of arguments in favor of different ways of seeing the world.” These ideas are arguments that are instrumental in the way one interprets and understands the world. In addition, according to Stone, “Ideas are a medium of exchange and a mode of influence even more powerful than money, votes and guns...Ideas are at the center of political conflict. Policy making, in turn, is a constant struggle over criteria for classification, the boundaries of categories, and the definition of ideals that guide the way people behave.” Thus, “policy is centrally about classification and differentiation, about how we do and should categorize in a world where categories are not given”, and questions regarding categorization, how to classify and what to classify, are not only fundamental struggles of politics, but also, are fundamental challenges in policy analysis. Thus, the analysis of policy requires a set of tools that are different from the set of tools used in natural science.

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73 Ibid., 11.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid., 380.
f) Defining Purpose of Policy Analysis

Finally, in this view of policy analysis, the whole of policy analysis entails ambiguous notions of values and various interpretations of meaning. Thus, Stone holds that policy analysis is a deconstructive act of revealing these various interpretations and meanings behind alternative policy perspectives, as well as a constructive act of making arguments for one’s own perspective—one’s own interpretations, meanings, and values. As Stone puts it, “analysis is itself a creature of politics; it is a strategically crafted argument, designed to create ambiguities and paradoxes and to resolve them in a particular direction.”

As a strategically crafted argument, a policy analysis is meant to advocate a specific way of understanding and interpreting the policy situation; the analyst is meant to give voice to a specific discourse within the various discourses regarding the specific policy issue. As Stone notes in her example of Policy Paradox in action, “I use the tools of Policy Paradox to help me think of the issues, analyze and critique the arguments of the other side, and argue persuasively for what I believe”, “I invite you, readers, to deconstruct both positions and to argue on your own for what you believe.” In this conception of policy analysis, Stone, like Yanow, does not liken policy analysis to a puzzle. The analyst here is not a puzzle solver that offers solutions to the policy problems, instead they are political advocates who argue for courses of action that the analyst personally believes to be good or right.

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76 Ibid., 8.

77 Ibid., 385; Ibid.
Also, as Stone notes regarding decision-analysis strategies of problem definition for her model of decision-making, the analyst should: (1) "state goals ambiguously and possibly keep some goals secret or hidden"; (2) 'Be prepared to shift goals and redefine goals as the political situation dictates'; (3) 'Keep undesirable alternatives off the agenda by not mentioning them'; (4) 'Make your preferred alternative appear to be the only feasible or possible one'; (5) 'Focus on one part of the causal chain and ignore others that would require politically difficult or costly policy actions'; (6) 'Use rhetorical devices to blend alternatives'; (7) 'Don't appear to make a clear decision that could trigger strong opposition'; (8) 'Select from the infinite range of consequences only those whose cost and benefits will make your preferred course of action look "best"'; and (9) 'Choose the course of action that hurts powerful constituents the least, but portray your decision as creating maximal social good for a broad public."\(^78\)

It is apparent from these suggestions, that Stone's view of policy analysis is focused around the analyst's own perspective and his or her ability to make the strongest argument for his or her way of viewing the policy situation. In essence, one of the main goals of the policy analyst, in Stone's perspective, is to shut out through seemingly reasoned criticism alternative views to a policy situation in order to advocate the analyst's own views – in order to get the analyst's representation of the problem, goal, and recommendation for a solution – accepted as the appropriate analysis for the issue at hand. Stone's theory in the hands of an elite few can be understood as a Machiavellian view of policy analysis, and in the hands of the many, can be understood as an adversarial view of policy analysis.

\(^78\) Ibid., Decision-Analysis Strategies of Problem Definition (Polis Model) 256.
Critical Theory: Frank Fischer's Discursive Theory

In *Evaluating Public Policy* and in *Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices*, Fischer presents what he refers to as a postempiricist theory of policy analysis. Yet, it is important to note that the category of postempiricism is a larger and more general category that may also include Yanow’s interpretive theory and Stone’s theory of analysis as craft. Thus, to maintain the conceptual distinction among these three theories, this thesis refers to Fischer’s theory as a discursive theory of policy analysis.

Unlike Yanow’s and Stone’s theories of policy analysis, Fischer’s discursive theory is rooted in the notion of integrating empirical and normative methods of inquiry for gaining social knowledge. Fischer holds both empirical and normative aspects of policy analysis as important to analysis as a whole. As we will see in Fischer’s methodology, he attributes each type of inquiry to a specific level of discourse. In his theory, empirical analysis is attributed to the first level of Analytic-Technical Discourse, and normative analysis comprises the remaining three levels of Contextual Discourse, Systemic Discourse, and Ideological Discourse respectively (see below, pp. 85 ff.).

1. Ontology

Fischer’s discursive theory, like Yanow’s and Stone’s, also denies the ontological tenet of the fact-value dichotomy. As Fischer explains of his postempiricist paradigm, the general paradigm of his theory, “The starting point for a postempiricist discursive

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80 Postempiricism has been used synonymously with pospositivism.
alternative to contemporary [positivist] policy inquiry begins with the recognition that the human and physical realms are inherently different... Whereas physical objects have no intrinsic meaning structures, human actors actively construct their social worlds. They do so by assigning meaning to events and actions, both physical and social. Human experience, as such, is enveloped in a non-material social, cultural, and personal realm of thoughts and meaning. Thus, Fischer, like Yanow and Stone, focuses on the thoughts and meaning—what has been referred to as value claims in the sections on Yanow and Stone—as the appropriate objects of inquiry for policy analysis. Fischer, like Yanow and Stone, also assumes that those thoughts and meanings (value claims), are knowable, and are central to the analysis of policy. As Fischer explains:

This understanding of social reality has profound import for the way we approach the study of social and political inquiry. Based on social meaning—motives, intentions, goals, purposes, values, and so forth—social action is constructed through language and, as such, its analysis has more in common with history and literature than with physical science. Rather than seeking proofs through formal logic and empirical experimentation, the investigation of social action requires the use of metaphoric processes that pull together and connect different experiences based on perceived similarities. The meaning of social experience is assessed in terms of its position in the larger patterns of which it is a part, be it a situation, a social system, or an ideology.

2. Epistemology

a) Denial of the Epistemological Tenet of the Fact-Value Dichotomy

Fischer, like Yanow and Stone, also denies the epistemological tenets that positivist theories of policy analysis assume are entailed by the ontological tenet of the fact-value

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82 Ibid., 49.
dichotomy. As Fischer notes regarding the epistemological tenet of the fact-value dichotomy, what he refers to as the ‘objective-subjective dualism’, "Stressing the subjective foundations of social reality, postempiricist scholars seek to overcome the objective-subjective dualism imposed by ‘positivist’ or ‘neopositivist’ epistemological doctrines." Thus, like Yanow and Stone, Fischer concludes non-material thoughts and meanings (value claims), are appropriate objects of inquiry and can yield knowledge. According to Fischer, "‘Facts’ are always ‘theory-laden’ and thus rest on interpretations. Emphasizing the integration of normative and empirical modes of discourse, postempiricist understand the discursive processes of confirmations and falsification as complex activities involving a whole network of assumptions, hypotheses, competing theories, even research programmes [sic], rather than singular hypotheses subject to direct empirical test (Sabia and Wallulis 1983: 15-16)." Thus, the acquisition of knowledge entails uncovering the various values, interpretations, and meanings associated with facts.

b) Characteristics of Knowledge

In addition, like Yanow and Stone, epistemologically, Fischer’s discursive theory holds what he refers to as a social constructionist epistemology. As Fischer explains:

Social constructionism refers to the varying ways in which the social realities of the world are shaped and perceived (Gergen 1999). Although there are theoretical differences among those who call themselves social constructionists, they share a common concern for how people assign meaning to the world.

The idea of social constructionism has its origins in the sociology of knowledge (Berger and Luckman 1967; Mannheim 1936). Most basically, it is an inquiry into the ways objects are seen through different mental structures or world

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83 Ibid., 12.
84 Ibid., 13.
views, how they are interpreted in different social circumstances and understood during different historical periods.\textsuperscript{85}

Social constructionism, according to Fischer, “starts with the recognition of the theoretical ladenness of facts. This interpretive position holds that social reality and empirical observations of it only exist in the context of a mental framework (a construct) for thinking about them. Social constructs or mental frameworks are grounded in values that determine our perceptions of reality.”\textsuperscript{86} This tenet regarding a mental framework, grounded in value claims, is similar to Yanow’s conception of frameworks that make sense of human artifacts, and Stone’s conception of ideas. Yet, unlike Yanow—who assumes a distinction between physical objects that are natural and ones that are cultural, which leads her to believe that facts can be understood independently of values—Fischer, like Stone, assumes that all facts are ultimately value-laden. Facts are always associated with value claims that must be explicated in order to be knowledge. Thus, according to Fischer, like Stone, facts alone are not propositional statements of knowledge.

Fischer’s discursive paradigm, unlike Yanow and Stone, also holds that knowledge is characterized by consensus. As Fischer puts it, knowledge is more a matter of “consensually ‘accepted belief’ than proof or demonstration.”\textsuperscript{87} According to Fischer, it is only when the multiple perspectives of various understandings or interpretations of a physical objects, or non-material thoughts and meanings (value claims), or events come together in a dialectical process and form a consensus that knowledge is established. As

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 53.

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 124.

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 131.
Fischer explains, “Given the perspectival nature of categories through which social and political phenomena are observed, knowledge of a social object can be better understood as something that emerges more from discursive interaction—or dialectical clash—of competing interpretations. Whereas consensus under empiricism is inductively anchored in the reproduction of objective tests and statistical confirmation, consensus under postempiricism is approached through the discursive construction of synthesis of competing views (Danziger 1995).”

Fischer also notes that knowledge, or the consensual belief established through a dialectical clash, must be supported, or warranted by other beliefs or judgments, as with any argument in informal logic. As Fischer explains it, policy analysis:

seeks to bring a wider range of contextually sensitive evidence and arguments to bear on the problem or position under investigation. As Hawkesworth (1988) explains, the reasons provided in support of alternatives organize evidence, marshal data, apply explanatory criteria, address multiple levels of argumentation, and employ various strategies of presentation....Through the process of deliberation and debate, a consensus emerges among particular researchers concerning what would be taken as valid explanation. Although the choice is sustained by reasons that can be articulated and advanced as support for the inadequacy of alternative interpretations, it is the practical judgment of the community of researchers and not the data themselves that establishes the accepted explanation [or knowledge].

Fischer also assumes what he refers to as a “‘coherence’ theory of reality that emphasizes the finite and temporally bounded character of knowledge.” As Fischer further explains, “In contrast to the ‘correspondence’ theory, which takes scientific concepts to directly correspond to the empirical referents of reality, the coherence theory

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88 Ibid.
89 Ibid., 134.
90 Ibid., 130.
addresses the indeterminedness [sic] of empirical positions." Although Fischer refers to this as a coherence theory of reality, it is more accurately referred to as the coherence theory of truth.

Yet, Fischer’s conception of knowledge is similar to the coherence theory of truth, there is some distinction. According to Laurence BonJour, the coherence theory of truth is “the view that the nature of truth [or knowledge] or the sole criterion of determining truth [or knowledge] is constituted by a relation of coherence between belief (or judgment) being assessed and other beliefs (or judgments).” As BonJour continues to explain, “coherence is intended to be a substantially more demanding relation than mere consistency, involving such things as inferential or explanatory relations within the system of beliefs.”

It may be said that there is coherence involved in Fischer’s conception of knowledge; to say that the belief is supported by evidence through inferential reasoning is to say that the belief is inferentially established to cohere or interconnect with other beliefs, and although the logical outcome may be that these interconnections establish a system of beliefs, Fischer supplies no indication that his conception of knowledge must belong to one entire coherent system of beliefs. As we will see in the following section on methodology, these tenets regarding the character of knowledge have significant implications for Fischer’s methods of policy analysis.

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91 Ibid.


93 Ibid.
Moreover, Fischer continues to explain that, "as long as there remains the possibility of further confrontation with other points of view, the construction of a consensus is never finished or complete." Therefore, according to Fischer’s understanding of knowledge, we are constantly in the process of creating knowledge through the process of hermeneutic dialectics, and constantly seeking a deeper and wider consensus. Thus, like Yanow and Stone, he assumes that knowledge always remains a construct and is always subject to change; it is never complete and is temporal.

c) Tenet of Both Scientific Causal and Quasi-Causal Modes of Explanation

A third epistemological tenet of Fischer’s theory is that knowledge entails both scientific causal modes of explanation and quasi-causal modes of explanation. Fischer notes in the above passage how social constructs or mental frameworks are grounded in ‘subjective’ experiences and understandings of the social and physical realms. This tenet leads Fischer, unlike Yanow and Stone, to the conclusion that knowledge of an event entails both scientific causal modes of explanation and quasi-causal modes of explanation. According to Fischer:

While empiricist social scientists stress the analysis of cause-effect relationships, they seldom establish any such relationship. Empirical analysts generally uncover statistical correlations between events, but are unable to prove that one caused the other (that is, that A appeared before B and thus made B happen). Statistical correlations can show only that two or more variables move together in a particular way, but it offers no evidence about causality...

To move beyond the empiricists’ statistical relationships in effort to have a closer look at ‘what causes what,’ that is, the ‘causal mechanism’, we have only one alternative—namely, interpretive analysis (Linn 1998). Whereas a causal (or statistical) relationship tells us which variables are involved, and something about the direction in which they move, only a closer qualitative analysis can offer us

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94 Fischer, Reframing Public Policy, 124.
statements about how and why these variables are connected. Only through interpretive methods can we discover the various possible [quasi-causal] explanations of what particular actors thought they were doing when they engaged in the actions pertinent to causal relationships.\textsuperscript{95}

Thus, according to Fischer, “The empirical data of neopositivist consensus can be turned into knowledge only through interpretive interaction with the other perspectives. Only by examining the data through conflicting frameworks or standpoints can unrecognized and hidden suppositions that give it meaning be uncovered and exposed.”\textsuperscript{96} By revealing the hidden suppositions through quasi-causal modes of explanation, one can more fully understand the object or the event described by scientific causal modes of explanation.

3. Methodology
a) Denial of Positivist Tenet

Of the Unity of Science

Given his intent on integrating positivist and interpretive methods for policy analysis, Fischer’s theory, like Yanow’s and Stone’s, denies the positivist’s methodological tenet of the unity of science. As Fischer explains:

Adamantly rejected is the idea that a unified understanding of science methodology can be applicable to all research questions. Underlying this commitment is a rejection of the possibility of neutral observational vocabulary that can be used to test and conclusively prove or falsify explanatory hypotheses. ‘Facts’ are always ‘theory-laden’ and thus rest on interpretations.\textsuperscript{97}

Within this rejection of the positivist’s conception of the unity of science, we can identify another distinction when comparing Stone’s and Fischer’s theories with

\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 158.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., 131.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 13.
Yanow's. Yanow does not assume that the methods of inquiry for physical objects that are natural need qualitative methods to yield knowledge, although she maintains that knowledge from both the natural sciences and the social sciences are constructs. She only maintains that the kind of method for inquiry for policy analysis is different from those of the natural sciences. Stone and Fischer, on the other hand, assume that all inquiry, including inquiry into the natural science, is value-laden. Thus, Stone's and Fischer's rejection of the positivist's conception of the unity of science is underscored by their acceptance of a different conception of the unity of science—that all inquiry, whether natural or social, entails methods of uncovering values, interpretations, and meanings.

b) Tenet of Situated Knower

One tenet of Fischer's theory, shared by Yanow and Stone, is that of a situated knower. This is the tenet that the subjects of understanding are situated within their own mental framework. As Fischer cites, ""The human subjects have preselected and preinterpreted this world by a series of commonsense constructs which determine their behavior, define the goal of their actions [and] the means available—which help them find their bearings in their natural and socio-cultural environment and come to grips with it' (Schutz 1962: 5-6)."" According to this passage, the subject of knowledge has a preselected and preinterpreted understanding of this world; an understanding based on commonsense constructs that form the subject's mental framework, and this mental framework determines their behavior, defines the goals of their actions and the means available to them. This preselection and preinterpretation locates the subject within a

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specific contextual time and place of history and experiences, and is entailed by one's ideology. For Fischer, like Yanow and Stone, the implication of a situated knower is that the frame of reference must be explicated within the process of policy analysis. Fischer does this throughout his final three levels of policy discourse.

c) Tenet of Hermeneutic Dialectics

Second, Fischer’s theory holds that social “knowledge has to be acquired through a process of hermeneutic dialectics.” As Fischer continues to explain:

Hermeneutics refers to the interpretive role in the formulation of subjective interpretations about reality. Basic to this interpretive process, as Gadamer (1976:15) puts it, is an appropriation of ‘the unknown with the known through a process of constructive understanding’. Stated simply, we understand things by fitting them into patterns of knowledge, events, and actions that we already possess, typically in narrative form, or that are at least available to us as members of a particular society. Dialectics is a logic that seeks to represent the confrontation of subjective interpretations with other interpretations. The goal of a dialectical clash among various interpretations is a constructive synthesis that leads to a new inter-subjective understanding. Dialectic hermeneutics is a process whereby ‘groups must confront and deal with the constructions of others’ in pursuit of a new consensual understanding (Lincoln and Guba 1989:41).

Knowledge for the social constructionist is thus forged through dialectically generated consensus.  

(1) Level of Analytic-Technical Discourse:

Program Verification

According to Fischer, hermeneutic dialectics is approached through four levels of discourse: (1) technical-analytic discourse, (2) contextual discourse, (3) systemic discourse, and (4) ideological discourse. The first (1) level of analytic-technical discourse occurs through the process of program verification. As Fischer notes, program

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99 Ibid., 124.

100 Ibid.
verification "focuses on the program objectives of a public policy." This level of discourse subsumes quantitative methods of inquiry. It is specifically concerned with: (a) whether the program proposed by the policy empirically fulfills its predetermined objective(s), (b) whether empirical analysis uncovers secondary or unanticipated effects that offset the program's predetermined objective(s), and (c) whether the program fulfills the objective(s) more efficiently than alternative means available. This process is essentially oriented towards gaining facts from physical objects. They involve experimental evaluative research, which "represents the formal application of the scientific method to the social action context of public programs", or through quasi-experimental evaluation.

(a) Experimental Evaluation

Experimental evaluation research entails: (1) "the specification of one or more programmatic objectives as a criterion for analysis"; (2) finding and developing quantitative indicators that appropriately measure [the programmatic objectives]'; (3) determining 'the appropriate target population and the corresponding sample for the

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101 Idem, Evaluating Public Policy, 27.
102 Ibid., 28.
103 Fischer notes here that experimental evaluation research is "sometimes referred to as 'evaluation research' in the policy literature" (Ibid., 28).
104 Ibid., 28-29.
evaluation'; 105 and (4) analyzing ‘the data collected after the experiment has been carried out.’ 106

Concerning the first step of (1) identifying objectives, Fischer notes that, “Ideally, such objectives are determined by the legislation that authorizes the program (Sylvia, Meier, Gunn, 1991). [Although,] in fact, however, enabling statutes are often rather broad and ambiguous, and the specific objectives may be set by program administrators rather than legislators.” 107

In regard to the second step of (2) finding or developing indicators that appropriately measure the specified objectives, Fischer notes that, “The choice of indicators, the extent of their application, and the duration of the research is governed by the purpose of the evaluation, the resources available to the evaluator, the time constraints on the completion of the research, and the nature of the program under examination.” 108 He also notes that the measurement of these indicators is done through standardized tests, survey questionnaires, closed-end interviews, or secondary sources such as complaint files and per capita uses of a service. 109

In regard to the third step of (3) determining the target population and the corresponding sample, according to Fischer, after the target group and sample has been

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105 As noted by Fischer, “The target population is defined in terms of the program under consideration; the sample is chosen to represent the population (Fitz-Gibbons et al., 1987)” (Ibid., 29).

106 Ibid., 28-29.

107 Ibid., 29.

108 Ibid.

109 Ibid.
determined the evaluator will ideally divide the sample group into two randomly selected equivalent groups, one of the groups would be the ‘experimental group’ and the other would be the ‘control group’. As Fischer notes, the purpose of the control group is to “assure that the effectiveness of the program is measured rather than other extraneous variables.”

In regards to the fourth step of (4) analyzing the data, Fischer explains that “in the language of research methodology, a hypothesis is tested to determine whether the program, as an ‘independent variable,’ has an effect on various conditions and factors which are constituted as ‘dependant’ variables. If a program is effective, the statistical presentation of experimental data should show a positive correlation between the program and the experimental group’s responses.”

This final step in experimental research also entails the two concepts of external validity and internal validity. These concepts are used as criteria for determining the acceptability of the experimental findings. “External validity,” as Fischer explains, ‘refers to whether the findings of an experiment can be replicated in similar circumstances and generalized to a larger population.” Internal validity, “concerns the ways in which an experiment is designed and implemented. To maximize the internal validity of an experiment, the researcher must focus on the explicitness of the definition

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item \footnotesize\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 29-30.
  \item \footnotesize\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 30.
  \item \footnotesize\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
  \item \footnotesize\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 31.
  \item \footnotesize\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
of the research question or hypothesis, and the development of a research procedure that provides for early estimates of both immediate and long-range effects. He or she must also confront the ever present concern that the study can become contaminated by social and technical factors extraneous to the experiment itself, the appropriateness of the people selected to participate, and the tests chosen to measure the experiment.\textsuperscript{115}

It is within this final step of analyzing the data collected from the experiment that one will find the answers to the first two questions of program verification. Depending on the outcome of the test result(s), it is assumed that one would be able to determine whether the program does in fact, justified by empirical evidence, fulfill its predetermined objective, or in cases where it does not, the empirical analysis may uncover secondary or unanticipated effects that offset the program’s predetermined objective(s).

(b) Quasi-Experimental Research

Quasi-experimental research, as Fischer notes, is more often used when evaluating public programs, for “it is rarely if ever possible for every aspect of an experiment to be carried out under completely controlled conditions. For example, it may be ethically, politically, or legally improper to create a control group by denying a service to people. Or it may be impractical to use pretest measures for a program that is already in operation.”\textsuperscript{116} According to Fischer, there are four different forms of quasi-experimental designs that are particularly important in quasi-experimental research: (1) ‘true control group, posttest only design’, which is used “when a pretest is not available or when it would take too much time (Fitz-Gibbon, Morris, and Lindheim, 1987)”; (2) ‘pretest-

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid, 31-32.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 32-33.
posttest, non-equivalent control design’, which is used “when the researcher cannot randomly assign subjects to the control group”; (3) ‘single group times-series design’, which is used “when a control group cannot be established, but the same measures can be applied to one group of people or things several times before and several times after the program’s implementation”; and (4) ‘pretest-posttest design with no control group’, which is used “to examine obvious effects, but without the confidence that the program and not an outside variable has influenced results.”

As Fischer notes, these four types of quasi-experimental design all attempt to make use of as many elements of experimental evaluation research as possible. Thus, we will find many of the four elements of: (1) specifying the one or more programmatic objectives as criteria for analysis; (2) finding and developing quantitative indicators that appropriately measure the specified objective(s); (3) determining the appropriate target population and the corresponding sample for the evaluation; and (4) analyzing the data collected after the experiment has been carried out, within quasi-experimental research. Much of the variances among these quasi-experimental research methods and within experimental research methods are found in how each quasi-experimental method, due to the various difficulties that may arise, treats the finding or development of quantitative indicators, and the determination of the target group in its corresponding experimental method.

In that they reflect the method of experimental evaluation research, the methods of quasi-experimental research are assumed to also be able to determine whether a program

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117 Ibid., 34; Ibid.; Ibid.; Ibid., 34-35.
118 Ibid., 28.

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fulfills its predetermined objective, or in cases where it does not, the empirical analysis may uncover secondary or unanticipated effects that offset the program’s predetermined objective(s). Although as Fischer notes, “each of these quasi-experimental designs introduces a degree of uncertainty about the reliability and validity of the experimental findings.” Thus, the degree to which quasi-experimental methods can determine whether the program does in fact fulfill its predetermined objective, or may uncover secondary or unanticipated effects that offset the program’s predetermined objective(s), is more uncertain than what is assumed of experimental research methods.

The final question in program verification, the question of whether the program fulfills the objective(s) more efficiently than the alternative means available, is determined most often by either cost-benefit analysis or risk-benefit analysis (a variant of cost-benefit analysis). As Fischer states, “once an outcome of a program has been empirically established, evaluation can further measure it, as a ‘benefit’, against the costs that were involved in achieving it.” And as Fischer continues, in the method of cost-benefit analysis, “the analyst first identifies the monetary costs of the input factors needed to accomplish a particular program, then assigns monetary values to the estimated or actual outcomes associated with the programs, and finally calculates the efficiency of the program as a ratio of costs expended to benefits produced. An efficient program is one in which the benefits outweigh the costs; an inefficient program is one in which the costs outweigh the benefits.”

119 Ibid., 35.

120 Ibid.

121 Ibid.
In regards to risk-benefit analysis, Fischer notes, “essentially, risk-benefit analysis is a type of cost-benefit analysis in which the negative consequences of a project or program are measured in terms of the types and magnitudes of risk to individuals or to communities instead of in monetary units” (Sylvia, Meier, Gunn, 1991:60). As Fischer continues, “the methodology of risk-benefit analysis is fundamentally an integration of two methodologies: risk assessment and cost-benefit analysis.”

In program verification, as we saw within its three focusing questions, and within the method of experimental evaluation research, quasi-experimental evaluation, cost-benefit analysis, and risk benefit analysis, the process of verification specifies a discourse that addresses the use of quantitative measurements in determining whether a policy fulfills its specified program objectives. It is important to note here that Fischer makes a distinction between policy objectives and policy goals. Although they may seem one and the same, policy objectives are “quantifiable programmatic criteria” derived from broadly stated abstract policy goals.

Within Fischer’s methodology, this is only the first level of discourse in which policy analysts take part. For Fischer, although program verification may direct inquiry, knowledge consists in understanding the meanings and values associated with the object of inquiry. Thus, the analyst moves from this point of analysis to discovering the meanings and values associated with these objects or events in the second level of

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122 Ibid., 38.
123 Ibid., 39.
124 Ibid., 27.
125 Ibid.
discourse – contextual discourse. By doing so, the analyst shifts from quantitative modes of inquiry to interpretive modes of inquiry.

(3) Level of Contextual Discourse:

Situational Validation

Contextual discourse, for Fischer, constitutes what he refers to as first-order policy evaluation. First-order policy evaluation is concerned with what Fischer refers to as first-order constructs, “the social actor’s constructs.” Thus, the focus of contextual discourse, which entails the process of situational validation, is in revealing the constructs of the social actors, and results in a first-order explanation. This is similar to what Yanow refers to as first-level interpretation of the policy situation experienced by the various stakeholders or policy-relevant actors. This is essentially oriented towards gaining knowledge of non-material thoughts and meanings (value claims). Similar to Yanow’s and Stone’s use of hermeneutic methods, according to Fischer, through case studies, observation and interviews, the policy analyst is thought to gain an understanding of (1) how various stakeholders may see the various elements of the program verification as being relevant or not to the objective at hand, (2) how various stakeholders view the situation or the problem and make cases for exceptions, and (3) how various stakeholders understand the objectives to constitute differing criteria. These three elements constitute understanding the various perspectives of various stakeholders in regards to the information arrived at from program verification.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{127} Idem, Reframing Public Policy, 51.}\]
As Fischer notes regarding the process of situational validation, "The validation phase of policy evaluation is concerned with the relevance of policy objectives employed in an evaluative judgment. Whereas verification attempts to show that a program fulfills or fails to fulfill an objective, validation asks whether the policy objectives are appropriate to the specific problem situation under investigation. To render such an assessment, evaluation turns from an emphasis on the empirical rigor of quantitative research to normative discourse and the interpretive methods of qualitative analysis." 128

Fischer continues to explain that the method of situational validation is centered on three major questions: (1) "is the program objective(s) relevant to the problem"; (2) "are there circumstances in the situation that require an exception be made to the objective(s)"; and (3) "are two or more objectives equally relevant to the problem situation." 129

According to Fischer, in answering the first question of situational validation, (1) whether the program objectives are relevant to the problem under investigation, the analyst is to produce an argument, according to the rules of informal logic, that argues that the variables selected and measured during the process of program vindication were determined according to the objective, and that the objective meets the requirements of certain higher goals which have been obtained from expanding the terms of the objectives to greater abstraction. As Fischer explains it, "The relevance of a program can be established through both an appeal to the facts of the situation and the more general (or higher) goal from which the objective at issue has been reduced. The appeal to a higher goal is essentially an exercise in logic. It entails a logical demonstration that the

128 Idem, Evaluating Public Policy, 69.

129 Ibid., 70.
objective under investigation actually meets the requirements of the higher criterion. According to the principles of normative logic, it is said that the objective falls within the range or scope of the higher goal...With regard to the facts of the situation, the focus is on empirical context from which the program variables are selected and measured.\textsuperscript{130}

The second question of situational validation, (2) determining whether there are circumstances in the situation that require an exception be made to the objective(s), according to Fischer, “must be based on evidence showing that it is better to permit an exception to the objective than to fulfill it. A circumstantial exception requires showing that the objective under judgment is applied to a situation in which it leads to secondary or unexpected consequences that offset—qualify, compromise, or perhaps even negate—the beneficial outcomes. Such consequences can result from either conflict between competing criteria, specific dimensions of the situation, or both. Basic, then, to such a deduction is the empirical description and definition of the particular facts of the situation.”\textsuperscript{131}

Not only does identifying exceptions entail the understanding of the empirical description and definition of the particular facts of the situation,\textsuperscript{132} but this question also

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., 73.

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 74.

\textsuperscript{132} By ‘empirical description’ or ‘definition’, Fischer understands this to indicate what descriptions or definitions were used as empirically testable variables of the situation or event. Thus, Fischer’s notion of empirical definition reflects the integration of both quantitative and qualitative methods. It considers these definitions to be supported by empirical evidence, but it also admits to the notion that descriptions and definitions are socially constructed, thus there is a possibility of having competing descriptions or definitions that are used as variables for empirical verification. The key to understanding this conception of empirical description or definition is that, according to Fischer, if there are competing descriptions or definitions, then these are not forms of knowledge,
"involves determining what constitutes a good reason for inferring conclusions entitled by particular circumstances. In particular terms, this involves assembling both the arguments for and against specific programmatic objectives and the empirical facts of the situation, and subjecting them logical rules or reason. The most basic objective is to decide whether or not there is anything about the factual circumstances themselves which requires that an exception be made to the application or use of the criterion [determined by the objective]."\textsuperscript{133}

The final question of situational validation, (3) determining whether there are two or more objectives equally relevant to the problem situation, occurs "when an aspect of one [objective] that is judged to be bad is considered to be good by another [objective]."\textsuperscript{134} This occurs within the process of situational validation primarily when various stakeholders view the problem or the objective differently. In this case, according to Fischer, "to resolve such conflict, it is necessary to determine which of the objectives takes precedence, a process involving a logical appeal to higher-order criteria. Whether one or another objective is better is established by ranking them according to a higher standard or goal. When one objective is determined to take precedence over the others, it can be said that the first one is a ‘higher’ claim or establishes a ‘higher obligation.’"\textsuperscript{135}

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 74.

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 74-75.
As Fischer notes, there may be no higher level goal or principle that would help in resolving the conflict of competing objectives, thus one would be move from the first-order evaluation of situational validation to the second-order evaluation of societal vindication, which occurs within Fischer’s third level of discourse—systemic discourse. Second-order evaluation is concerned with the constructs of social science and results in the social scientists’ second-order explanation. This too is oriented towards arriving at knowledge of non-material thoughts and meanings (value claims).

(4) Level of Systemic Discourse:

Societal Vindication

As Fischer goes on to explain, “at the level of policy vindication, the societal system is the normative frame of reference. A societal system, in this respect, can be broadly understood as an interdependent set of political, economic, and cultural relationships. The concept of the ‘system’ is used here to refer to a set of arrangements principally structured by the state and the economy and governed by power and money (Habermas, 1973).” Given the normative reference of the societal system, the first task of vindication involves the:

Identification of goals, values, and practices of the institutional arrangements of the social system which the policy is designed to influence, facilitate, or change. Second, it involves an empirical assessment of the policy’s desired impact on these normative processes. The comparison in the evaluation involves the adoption and testing of other actual or possible policy goals and assumptions that may or may not have instrumental or contributive value for the same social system. The basic task is to develop hypotheses about the wider societal impacts

136 Ibid., 75.

137 Idem, Reframing Public Policy, 51.

138 Ibid., 112-13.
that would be expected to result from the policy goals and assumptions, and to test them to see if they occur.\textsuperscript{139}

Identifying the goals, values, and practices of the societal system and testing the policy goals, and alternative policy goals, to determine whether the policy, or alternative policy, has an instrumental or contributive value, or is harmful to the societal system, is done by using a range of various research methods. The choice of which of these methods is used is determined by the policy problem, and the methods that can be employed ranges from quantitative methods of empirical data collection methodologies, large-scale cross-sectional analyses, cost-benefit data, systems simulation to qualitative methods of interviews and case studies.\textsuperscript{140}

These research methods are used not only in determining the effects of the policy, or policy alternatives, but they are also employed to gain understanding of the normative framework of the society, the goals and values of the society. In determining the normative framework of a society, these methods assist specifically in identifying the underlying assumptions of the normative framework of society. Some of these assumptions are characterized as assumptions regarding:

- The proper scope of market versus governmental activity.
- The proper distribution of power and authority among various levels of government; the identification of social and political groups whose welfare is considered to be most important.
- The positions of substantive policy conflicts, such as economic development versus environmental protection.
- The basic choices concerning policy means, such as inducements, persuasion, and coercion.
- The desirability of political participation by various segments of the social system: elite versus public participation; experts versus elected officials.

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., 116.

\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., 117.
The perceived ability of society to solve the various substantive problems, for example, technological optimism versus pessimism.\textsuperscript{141}

Although these methods may contribute to the final process of determining whether policy programs, or policy alternatives, have any instrumental or contributive value to the societal system, the determination of whether or not they do is done by the methods of determining macro costs and benefits. As with the first two levels of discourse, the analyst in the end presents his finding as an argument according to the rules of informal logic. In this case, the analyst argues in support of a specific program, or program alternative, as one that has the most instrumental or contributive value to the societal system. If this claim is further contested on the basis of conflicting conceptions of determining macro costs and benefits, the evaluation, according to Fischer, moves form the third level of systems discourse to the fourth level of discourse, ideological discourse.

(5) Level of Ideological Discourse:

Social Choice

According to Fischer, "the fourth and final discursive phase of the logic of policy deliberation turns to ideological and value questions. Here the informal logic of criteria of consistency and transcendent values come into play. Social choice seeks to establish and examine the selection of a critical basis for making rationally informed choices about societal systems and their respective ways of life."\textsuperscript{142} This process is referred to by Fischer as social choice, and is also oriented towards arriving at non-material thoughts

\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 113.

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid, 195.
and meanings (value claims). As Fischer continues to explain, social choice raises the following types of questions:

- Do the fundamental ideals (or ideological principles) that organize the accepted social order provide a consistent basis for a legitimate resolution of conflicting judgments?
- If the social order is unable to resolve the basic values conflicts, do other orders equitably accommodate the relevant interests and needs that the conflicts reflect?
- Do normative reflection and empirical evidence support the justification and adoption of alternative principles and values?¹⁴³

These questions, as noted by Fischer, are questions most often dealt with by political philosophers rather than the policy analysts.¹⁴⁴ What the policy analyst, according to Fischer, needs to consider in this final discursive level is that the analytic judgments made throughout their evaluations, and the evaluations themselves, are framed within a specific ideological framework, a framework of "fundamental ideals (or ideological principles)" that organize a specific social order.¹⁴⁵

In explicating this framework, Fischer hopes that the analyst not only understands the possibility of bias located within their judgments and within their evaluations, but he also hopes that the analyst may come to understand the ideological roots of various conflicting interpretations of a policy situation.¹⁴⁶ In understanding the various ideological roots of different interpretations of the policy situation, it is also hoped that the analyst may eventually be able to establish a consensual understanding, or interpretation, of the policy

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 161.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 195.

¹⁴⁶ Idem, Evaluating Public Policy, 113.
situation by establishing a consensus of certain fundamental normative principles of society.\textsuperscript{147}

It is important to note here that the characterization of Fischer's discursive theory as a representative of critical theory is rooted in the importance of his final discursive phase of ideological discourse. Because this level of discourse challenges the analyst to reveal the ideological framework behind the various perspectives within the fourth level of discourse—revealing with it specific presuppositions regarding society, citizens, and power—this level of discourse challenges the analyst to conduct a critical analysis of the interpretations of a policy issue and the various ideologies underlining that policy issue.

c) Defining Purpose of Policy Analysis

Finally, the last methodological tenet of Fischer's discursive theory of policy analysis is the tenet regarding the definition of policy analysis. According to Fischer, policy evaluation is defined as:

\begin{quote}
The activity of applied social science typically referred to as 'policy analysis' or 'policy science.' (Box 1.1) The field according to William Dunn (1981), is an applied endeavor 'which uses multiple methods of inquiry and argument to produce and transform policy-relevant information that may be utilized in political settings to resolve public problems.' Designed to supply information about complex social and economic problems and to assess the processes through which their resolution is pursued, evaluations can focus on policy or program outcomes ('outcome' or 'impact' evaluations), or on the processes by which a policy or program is formulated and implemented ('process' evaluation)...Ideally, policy evaluation provides politicians and citizens with intelligent basis for discussing and judging conflicting ideas, proposals and outcomes.\textsuperscript{148}
\end{quote}

Yet Fischer's theory is not only aimed at providing a framework for discourse, but he also holds that through his four levels of discourse, consensus may be established and

\textsuperscript{147} Idem, \textit{Reframing Public Policy}, 198.

\textsuperscript{148} Idem, \textit{Evaluating Public Policy}, 2.
solutions may be agreed upon. He holds that policy analysis needs to employ both interpretive and empirical modes of inquiry not only to arrive at an understanding of the policy and its many interpretations, but it also attempts to provide a framework for the discursive process in which stake-holders can talk about the issues at hand and eventually, hopefully, establish a consensus regarding the goals, problems and solutions. Thus, Fischer’s theory, unlike Yanow’s and Stone’s, is aimed not only at understanding, but also at arriving at a specific solution; a specific choice for the decision-maker(s). In this sense, Fischer’s theory, like positivist theories of policy analysis, likens policy analysis to a puzzle, which entails the possibility of a solution, although this solution may never be reached.

**Summary**

In this chapter, we have been introduced to three theories representing the three perspectives of the hermeneutic critique. All three theories are similar in their ontological, epistemological, and methodological tenets, although there are some points of departure. The similarities are primarily located within their ontological and epistemological tenets opposing the fact-value dichotomy, their tenet of quasi-causal explanations, their denial of the positivists’ doctrine of the unity of science, their tenet of the situated knower who can affect the outcome of analysis, and their tenet of hermeneutic methods of inquiry. These tenets can be identified as the general postpositivist paradigm that all three theories use, and can be used to distinguish them from positivist theories of policy analysis.
In addition, like positivist theories of policy analysis, through these paradigmatic tenets, the three theories acquire limitations to the kinds of problems that are to be considered, and the character of the solutions and the methods of inquiry. Yet, compared to the positivist paradigm of policy analysis, these paradigmatic tenets broaden the scope of the problems, solutions, and methods for policy analysis. As mentioned in Chapter II, one of the major criticisms of positivist paradigm for policy analysis was that the limitations it placed on these aspects of policy analysis were too narrow, especially because their ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy limit their inquiry to physical objects, or things that are reducible to physical objects. Thus, they obviate inquiry into value claims. The three theories representing the three perspectives of the hermeneutic critique offer paradigmatic tenets that broaden the scope of these aspects of policy analysis when compared to the positivist paradigm. Their denial of the positivist’s ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy lead them to conclude that value claims are not only appropriate for inquiry, but that inquiry into value claims is central to policy analysis.
CHAPTER IV

EVALUATING THEORIES OF
THE HERMENEUTIC CRITIQUE

As noted in the previous chapters, theorists and practitioners have proposed alternative theories to overcome some of the significant problems associated with positivist theories. These alternative theories have been identified in general as postpositivist theories or postempiricist theories. Within this general category of alternative theories to the general positivist paradigm, Morçöl has identified theories of the hermeneutic critique as the most coherent theory stream among postpositivist theories. As Morçöl continued to explain, there are three theoretical perspectives within the hermeneutic critique: the interpretive/phenomenological perspective, the discourse perspective, and the critical perspective.

In Chapter III, I presented a general summary of three theories representing each of the three perspectives within the hermeneutic critique. Many of the similarities between each of the theories lie in their ontological and epistemological tenets, especially the denial of the ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy. They also share the methodological tenet regarding the importance of using hermeneutic techniques in policy inquiry, and the denial of the positivist tenet of the unity of science. The question remains, given these three examples of the three perspectives within the hermeneutic critique, how well do they succeed in overcoming the criticisms that face
positivist theories of policy analysis? Thus, this chapter is centered on the question of whether the three theories representing the three perspectives of the hermeneutic critique are able to overcome the challenges presented by the criticisms of positivist theories of policy analysis. It focuses on four specific challenges: (1) the challenge of overcoming the ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy, (2) the challenge of providing a democratic process of decision-making within their method of policy analysis, (3) the challenge of providing a coherent theory of policy analysis, and (4) the challenge of resolving the problem of policy analysis as ideology.

In the broad sense regarding the revolution of the science of policy analysis, this question is aimed at determining whether the alternative paradigm used by the three theories representing the three perspectives of the hermeneutic critique is more successful than the positivist paradigm in resolving some of the key issues identified by theorists and practitioners. As Kuhn noted, “Paradigms gain their status because they are more successful than their competitors in solving a few problems that the group of practitioners has come to recognize as acute.”\(^1\) Thus, the question this chapter addresses is also aimed at determining whether the alternative general paradigm used by the three theories presented is worthy of the status that it is currently gaining.

\(^1\) Kuhn, 23.
The Challenge of the Ontological and Epistemological Tenets of the Fact-Value Dichotomy

As stated in Chapter II, the positivist paradigm of policy analysis holds the ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy. These tenets conclude that there exist two categories of things: physical objects that yield knowledge as facts, and value claims that are meaningless and thus, cannot yield any knowledge. They led positivist theories of policy analysis to limit their scope of inquiry to physical objects and facts. One reason is that the epistemological tenet of the fact-value dichotomy is rooted in the verification criterion of meaning, and according to the verification criterion of meaning, those things that are knowable, and thus have meaning or literal significance, are those things that are empirically verifiable through sense experience. As A.J Ayer explains, according to the verification criterion of meaning, “no statement which refers to ‘reality’ transcending the limits of all possible sense experience can possibly have any literal significance.”^2 Thus, the epistemological tenet of the fact-value dichotomy holds that “All knowledge was believed to depend on observation [via the five senses], thus any claims, whether theological, metaphysical, philosophical, ethical, normative, or aesthetic, which were not rooted in empirical observation, were rejected as meaningless.”^3 Therefore, derived from the ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy, positivist theories of policy analysis attempt to circumscribe the activity of policy analysis to those things that are empirically


^3 Hawkesworth, 38.
verifiable—supported by data from physical objects or things that are reducible to
physical objects—while taking value claims that entail various interpretations, meanings,
and values, and are not supported by empirical evidence as given.

It has been argued that the ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value
dichotomy reflect the positivist's misconception of the nature of the objects of inquiry for
policy analysis. As Fay, Yanow, Stone, and Fischer argue, following from their denial of
the ontological tenet of the fact-value dichotomy, not only can value claims yield
knowledge, but the use of this knowledge is what is most important to policy analysis.
They note that the objects of inquiry for policy analysis are also value claims, which are
necessarily value-laden; they entail interpretations, meanings, and values. The
epistemological tenet of the fact-value dichotomy, rooted in the ontological and
epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy, ignore this inherent value-laden
element of the objects inquiry for policy analysis; they should not be understood as given.

For the three theories representing the three perspectives of the hermeneutic critique,
the challenge is then to be able to overcome both the ontological and epistemological
tenets of the fact-value dichotomy; to provide a theory of policy analysis that considers
value claims significant to policy inquiry—a theory that takes note of the value-laden
nature of the objects of policy analysis—and to provide a method of gaining knowledge
of the value-laden aspects of the objects of inquiry for policy analysis.

In response to this challenge, Yanow, Stone, and Fischer propose ontological and
epistemological shifts—the denial of both the ontological and epistemological tenets of
the fact-value dichotomy. This also leads to a methodological shift that incorporates and
focuses on the use of qualitative methods of policy analysis and the discovery of quasi-
causal modes of explanation. As a result, Yanow proposes a theory of policy analysis that stresses the importance of the kind of knowledge derived from value claims, although she does not deny that knowledge can also be gained from physical objects alone, which results in knowledge as facts. For Fischer and Stone, the result is that only value claims can produce knowledge. This is because both Fischer and Stone argue that facts themselves are always value-laden. Thus, in order to know facts, one must also uncover the underlying meanings, interpretations, and values that are associated with facts. Thus, Fischer and Stone juxtapose the categories of objects that are knowable and not knowable which are presupposed by the positivist's ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy. Instead of presupposing that only facts, which are supported by empirical evidence obtained from physical objects or those things reducible to physical objects, are knowledge, they assume that only by explicating the value claims can one arrive at knowledge. Thus, only value claims (some embedded in physical claims) can produce knowledge.

The denial of both the ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy also lead the three theories to assume that assume that knowledge is a construct, and this leads them to conclude that it is never complete and is temporal. Although Fischer believes in the incompleteness and temporality of knowledge, he also assumes that knowledge is characterized by consensus, unlike Yanow and Stone. Thus, Fischer concludes that in most cases, when consensus is not established, we are always in the process of constructing knowledge—of establishing a consensus. Yanow simply concludes that knowledge is provisional, and Stone concludes that knowledge is subjective in regard to the truth of the statements.
Methodologically, the denial of the ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy lead all three theories to deny the positivist’s tenet of the unity of science. Yanow argues that because value claims can yield knowledge, but of a differing kind, the methods used to gain knowledge of physical objects and facts are not applicable to gaining knowledge from value claims. Fischer and Stone, on the other hand, argue that although both quantitative and qualitative methods are useful, knowledge is actually derived from qualitative methods, since they argue that facts must undergo qualitative analysis in order to produce knowledge. Thus, all three theories offer methods for gaining knowledge of value claims that are focused around discovering various interpretations, meanings, and values. However, for Fischer and Stone, these are the only methods that produce knowledge. Most often, these methods are referred to as hermeneutic methods, and the result is a quasi-causal understanding of social or natural phenomena.

Methodologically, all three theories also focus on the importance of quasi-causal modes of explanation. Yanow argues that discovering the quasi-causal explanations held by various communities of meaning is the main objective for policy analysis. To map out the various discourses within a specific policy situation is to provide the quasi-causal explanations held by differing communities of meaning. For Stone, quasi-causal explanations are objects of deconstruction. A major step in policy analysis for Stone is the task of deconstructing the various quasi-causal explanations embedded within the competing policy perspectives. For Fischer, quasi-causal explanations play significant roles within his second and fourth levels of discourse—contextual discourse and ideological discourse respectively. In contextual discourse, the objective is to provide a
micro quasi-causal explanation of the knowledge gained from technical-analytic discourse, whereas in ideological discourse, the objective is to provide a macro quasi-causal explanation of the conclusions drawn from systemic discourse.

At first glance, these solutions to the challenge of the ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy seem obvious. If the ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy, which lead to the positivist tenet of the unity of science and the focus on deductive-nomological explanations or explanations of probabilistic law, are problematic, then why remain committed to them? If the criticism is that positivist theories fail to give due weight to the methodological importance of meanings, interpretations, and values, due to their ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy, which leads them to their methodological tenets, then it makes sense to offer as a solution alternative theories founded upon a paradigm that denies the ontological and epistemological tenet of the fact-value dichotomy, denies the positivist tenet of the unity of science, and uses alternative methods of inquiry and modes of explanation. By doing so, the three theories successfully bring to the forefront those issues that positivist theories have been criticized as obviating. The explications of value claims become important aspects of each of the three theories. This effectively broadens the scope of inquiry for policy analysis and allows not only for inquiry into value claims, but also focuses policy analysis towards such inquiry.

Yet, questions remain regarding the further implications of the ontological, epistemological, and methodological shifts made by the three theories representing the three perspectives of the hermeneutic critique. The criticism that positivist theories of policy analysis fail to recognize value claims as knowable and thus, important to analysis,
is not only about their inability to recognize this claim as legitimate, but it also points to
the importance of the knowledge gained from value claims to the process of policy
analysis, especially within the process of decision-making. Thus, given that the three
theories representing the three perspective of the hermeneutic critique are able to meet
the challenge of providing a theory that stresses the importance that value claims are able
to yield knowledge of a certain kind, and provides for an alternative method of inquiry
and mode of explanation that are tailored to the kind of knowledge gained from value
claims, how is it that they apply this knowledge to the decision-making process of policy
analysis? How is it that they realize the importance of the kind of knowledge gained
from value claims?

The Challenge of Providing a Democratic
Process of Decision-Making

Positivist theories of policy analysis have also been criticized for denying a
democratic process of decision-making. This is because positivist theories of policy
analysis understand value claims as given, and so fail to take into consideration the
various interpretations, meanings, and values that may come into play during the analysis
of policy. Therefore, the conclusion that a specific policy alternative is the ‘best’ is
undemocratic because it does not allow for alternative interpretations, meanings, and
values that may be held by relevant communities of meaning or stakeholders. This also
leads to the conclusion that the decisions arrived at by the positivist policy analyst is ill
informed, since these alternative interpretations, meaning, and values are not taken into
consideration. Thus, the ontological and epistemological denials of the fact-value
dichotomy are intimately related to the importance of incorporating a democratic process of decision-making. The incorporation of a democratic process of decision-making provides the instrumental use of knowledge gained from value claims; the knowledge that the epistemological denial of the fact-value dichotomy stresses as being most important in the analysis of policy.

This criticism is further associated with notions of democracy, equal participation, and the legitimacy of the decision made by policy analysts and decision-maker(s). As Fischer notes, “Citizen participation is the cornerstone of the democratic political process. The case for democracy derives its basic normative rationale from the principle that government decisions should reflect the consent of the governed. Citizens in a democracy have a right—even obligation—to participate meaningfully in public decision-making and to be informed about the bases for government policies.” The positivist’s technocratic conception of policy analysis denies citizens their democratic right to participate in the decision-making process. In doing so, it leads the public to question whether the decisions reflect the consent of the governed. In addition, according to Fischer, a democratic process of decision-making helps preserve democracy. As Fischer notes, “Beyond its essential contribution to democracy per se, citizen participation in the policy process can contribute to the legitimization of policy development and implementation. Participation, in this respect, can be understood as helping to build and preserve present and future decision-making capacities....

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5 This criticism is of course based on the assumption that democracy is good or necessary for a society.
Discursive participation offers, in particular, the possibility of getting around the debilitating effects of interest group competition that often plague liberal pluralism (Hiskes 1998).\textsuperscript{6} Thus, the positivist's technocratic conception of policy analysis is also viewed as being detrimental to a democracy—it illegitimates the decision, the process of policy development, and the process of implementation as democratic.\textsuperscript{7}

Thus, another challenge for the three theories representing the three perspectives of the hermeneutic critique, and postpositivist theories in general, is whether they are able to provide a theory that incorporates a democratic process of decision-making; a theory that appropriately makes use of the knowledge derived from value claims. The three criticisms noted above also provide criteria for determining whether a theory is able to successfully overcome the challenge of incorporating a democratic process of decision-making. These criteria ask whether the instrumental use of knowledge gained from value claims: (1) adequately provide for a well-informed decision; (2) reflect the consent of the governed, in other words, does it accommodate the right of the citizen to participate in the decision-making process; and (3) help to legitimize the process of policy development and implementation as democratic?

Although the three theories, each to differing extents, attempt to provide for a more democratic process of decision-making, in that they take into consideration the various value claims that entail various interpretations, meanings, and values that may be associated by various communities of meaning or stakeholders, only Fischer's discourse

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{7} The force of this criticism is also based on the assumption that democracy is good or necessary for a society.
theory is able to fully overcome the challenge of providing a democratic process for
decision-making by fulfilling all three criteria listed above.

Fischer’s theory addresses the importance of inquiry into value claims specifically
within the last three levels of discourse assumed by his theory. According to Fischer’s
theory, within the second level of contextual discourse, through the process of situational
validation, various interpretations, meanings, and values are taken into consideration in
order to determine whether the assessment that policy objectives have been met is
consistent with the various interpretations, meanings, and values held by various
communities of meaning or stakeholders. Within this process of situational validation,
there may be an issue of irreconcilable competing objectives or values. In this case,
according to Fischer “there is no possibility of resolving the dispute at the level of
validation. If the parties are committed to pursue the discourse further, they must move
to the level of vindication.” It is at this point, where the shift from second level of
contextual discourse to the third level of systemic discourse, or from the process of
situational validation to the process of societal vindication, occurs.

According to Fischer, societal vindication “turns to an evaluation of the instrumental
consequences of a policy goal and its normative tenets for the extant social system as a
whole. In the language of politics and policy evaluation, goals and assumptions are
examined for their contribution to the larger common good, public interest, or general
social welfare of the society, shorthand normative standards for the social order as a
whole.” Thus, within the third level of systemic discourse, the competing objectives or

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9 Ibid., 111-112.
values that were identified during situational validation are tested against systems-oriented beliefs and assumptions.

One problem with societal vindication is that the goals and values of competing communities of meaning or stakeholders are evaluated against the normative institutional goals and values of the societal system, which are generally held as constant. Because of this, the competing objective or goal that questions the legitimacy of the constantly held societal norms and assumptions may tend to lose out. Yet, within Fischer's methods for policy analysis, analysis can be taken further into the fourth level of ideological discourse, in which those objectives or goals that question the current societal norms, and may tend to lose out, can question the ideological foundations of the current societal norms. Thus, challenges to the societal norms, which are generally held as constant, are addressed within the fourth level of ideological discourse through the process of social choice.

Fischer's fourth level of ideological discourse, the process of social choice, deals with the questions of (1) whether the fundamental ideals (or ideological principles) that organize the accepted social order provide a consistent basis for a legitimate resolution for conflicting judgments, (2) whether when the social order is unable to resolve the basic value conflicts, other orders equitably accommodate the relevant interests and needs that the conflicts reflect, and (3) whether the normative reflection and empirical evidence support the justification and adoption of alternative principles and values. According to Fischer, political philosophers rather than policy analysts and the various community members or stakeholders are to address these questions. Yet, during this process of

\[10\] Idem, Reframing Public Policy, 195.
ideological discourse, communities of meaning or stakeholders can talk about the various ideologies provided by political philosophers. They openly discuss which ideological perspective they endorse and the points of conflict between competing ideological perspectives. Thus, although Fischer's theory does assume that some person(s) sits in the position of a decision-maker(s), all the relevant stakeholders or communities of meaning share the actual process of decision-making. The result is that, the decision that decision-maker(s) is to make, is the decision that has been consensually decided upon among the various stakeholders or communities of meaning. It is specifically because of this that Fischer's theory is able to meet the second and third criteria. In addition, by recognizing, within all three levels of discourse, the possibility of alternative interpretations, meanings, and values, Fischer's theory is able to fulfill the first criterion.

Unlike Fischer's theory, Yanow's theory falls short of incorporating a democratic process of decision-making. The main goal of policy analysis, for Yanow's theory, is to map out the architecture of policy discourse for the decision-maker(s). This entails inquiry into the various value claims held by the various communities of meaning relevant to the policy issue at hand. By doing so, Yanow's theory allows each voice or policy perspective to be equally heard by the decision-maker(s). Thus, Yanow's theory uses the various value claims that may be associated with various communities of meaning in order to provide for a more informed decision.

Yet, Yanow's theory fails to fulfill the other two criteria for determining whether a theory successfully incorporates a democratic process of decision-making. It may be true that according to Yanow's theory, the decision-maker(s) is made aware of the various perspectives within a policy discourse, but the decision itself is ultimately left up to the
decision-maker(s). Because of this, the decision-maker(s) may or may not deny the legitimacy of some of the perspectives within the policy discourse. Thus, Yanow’s theory may not actually provide these various communities of meaning an actual role in the decision-making process and the decision may not reflect the consent of the governed. In addition, because the decision-maker(s) may deny the legitimacy of certain perspectives that have been presented, Yanow’s theory also fails to guarantee the fulfillment of the criterion of helping to legitimize the process of policy development and implementation as democratic. Thus, Yanow’s theory of interpretive policy analysis fails to fully overcome the challenge of incorporating a democratic process of decision-making by failing to fulfill two of the three determining criteria. Her theory is open to democracy, but does not require it.

Yanow’s contingent fourth step of intervention also fails to ensure that the decision reflects the consent of the governed and that the process of policy development and implementation is democratic. According to Yanow, if the analyst wishes to pursue with intervention, the analyst may (1) “show implications of different meanings/interpretations for policy formulations and/or action,” (2) ‘show that differences [or conflicts in meaning] reflect different ways of seeing [epistemological and ethical differences],’ or (3) ‘negotiate/mediate/intervene in some other form to bridge differences (e.g., suggest reformulation or reframing [of policy]).’ The analyst may choose to do one or all three of these steps of intervention, yet because the decision-maker(s) can still deny the legitimacy of certain implications of different meanings, interpretations, or values, of

\[11\] Yanow, Table 1.1, 22.
different ways of seeing, or the analyst’s attempt to reformulate or reframe the policy, Yanow’s possible steps of intervention are insufficient for fulfilling the last two criteria.

Stone’s theory also falls short of incorporating a democratic process of decision-making. According to Stone’s theory, policy analysis is partially deconstructive and partially constructive. Her theory holds that policy analysts should first deconstruct the various interpretations, meanings, and values that may be associated with alternative policy perspectives, and then construct a policy alternative that the analyst believes to be the ‘best.’ The ultimate outcome of this process is policy analysis as a strategically crafted argument that gives voice to a specific way of understanding and interpreting the policy situation. Thus, policy analysts are understood to be political advocates.

Although Stone’s method takes into consideration the various alternative policy perspectives that may hold various value claims, her method does so only as a step toward making one’s own position or voice stronger. As Stone notes during her example of her method in action in regards to affirmative action, “I use the tools of Policy Paradox to help me think about affirmative action, understand the politics of the issue, analyze and critique the arguments of the other side, and argue persuasively for what I believe.”12 Thus, for Stone’s theory, although differing perspectives (which entail various value claims) do come into play within the process of decision-making, they do not have an equal voice, since those alternative perspectives are used only to be criticized in order to make the analyst’s own position stronger. Stone’s use of the knowledge gained from inquiry into value claims is not necessarily to provide an adequately informed decision, especially because she suggests that the analyst “state goals

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12 Stone, 385.
ambiguously and possibly keep some goals secret or hidden'; ‘Keep undesirable alternatives off the agenda by not mentioning them'; ‘Make your preferred alternative appear to be the only feasible or possible one'; ‘Focus on one part of the causal chain and ignore others that would require politically difficult or costly policy actions'; ‘Select from the infinite range of consequences only those whose cost and benefits will make your preferred course of action look “best”'; and ‘Choose the course of action that hurts powerful constituents the least, but portray your decision as creating maximal social good for a broad public.”

Thus, Stone’s theory fails to fulfill the criterion of providing a democratic process of decision-making that allows for an adequately well-informed decision to be made.

As an adversarial theory, Stone may argue that by representing a single voice within the policy discourse, the process of decision-making may be able to fulfill the first criterion, since alternative voices or interpretations, meanings, and values may be represented by competing policy analyses. This argument relies on the assumption that the process of discourse is free, informed, and democratic.

Some liken this to pluralist assumptions that in a democratic society the process of decision-making is necessarily democratic. But, according to Schneider and Ingram, critics of pluralist theories “contend that pluralist theory and research have provided an idealized view of policy making that no longer or has never been realized in the United States,”

and in a society that is defined by dominant and suppressed members, it is not true that power and information is fairly distributed, so consent is not necessarily free and

\[13\] Ibid.

\[14\] Helen Ingram and Anne Larason Schneider, 18.
informed. As Schneider and Ingram further note, such authors as Ted Lowi offered the kind of intense criticisms of past pluralist theories of policy analysis. They explain how, "During three decades of writing Lowi has argued that the competition among interest groups that pluralist theory holds as a necessary feature of democracy does not exist in the United States. Lowi (1964) contended that the pluralist vision of democracy as a competition among a large number of relatively equal groups has been replaced with 'interest group liberalism' in which powerful groups capture the policy-making and implementation process. Interest group liberalism cannot achieve rational policy results (because it is unable to say 'no' to anyone) nor can it address issues of justice (because the state is mainly the tool of powerful interests)."\(^{15}\)

In addition, as Schneider and Ingram note, "During the formulation phase [of a policy], 'iron triangles' of interest groups, policy analysts, and legislative staff often control the options that will be considered (Lowi 1979). Again, the interest of the less powerful may lose out in this process, as the shaping of policy content usually reflects the way others have framed the problems. Legislation may be packaged in such a way during the deliberations within the legislative body that preferences of persons who are less attentive lose to those that have full-time lobbyists."\(^{16}\) Thus, by inaccurately assuming the political forum and the process in which policies are decided upon are ideally democratic, Stone's theory also fails to meet the criterion of accommodating the right of the citizen to participate in the decision-making process, thereby being unable to ensure that the decision reflects the consent of the governed, and also fails to fulfill the

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 22.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 18-19.
third criterion of contributing to the legitimization of the process of policy development and implementation as democratic.

Thus, Fischer’s theory adequately overcomes the challenge providing a democratic process of decision-making. Yanow’s theory marginally overcomes this challenge, and it is doubtful that Stone’s theory overcomes this challenge.

The Challenge of Providing a Coherent Theory of Policy Analysis

Another criticism of positivist theories of policy analysis is that they are incoherent theories in that they attempt to provide a value-neutral analysis of inherently value-laden objects of inquiry or by completely obviating the value-laden objects of inquiry. This criticism is ultimately about the theory’s consistency with the nature of policy analysis. As Kuhn notes, “Normal science does and must continually strive to bring theory and fact into closer agreement.”17 Here then, we can understand this criticism as a criticism regarding the external coherence of positivist theories; of whether the theories are in closer agreement with the nature of policy analysis.

According to the positivist’s definition of policy analysis, the ultimate objective of policy analysis is in “choosing the best policy alternative according to an explicit decision rule.”18 This conception of policy analysis entails a specific choice for the policy maker; that choice being one that has been determined by the technocratic policy scientist as the ‘best’ policy alternative in light of other alternatives; without any

17 Kuhn, 80.

18 Jenkins-Smith, 11.
consideration to the possibilities of various value claims that entail various interpretations, meanings, and values. Given the claim that the objects of policy analysis are inherently value-laden, the positivist policy analysts are unable to resolve this conflict between their conception of policy analysis and the value-ladenness of the objects of inquiry for policy analysis. This is due their ontological, epistemological, and methodological tenets that are in inherent contradiction with the conception that the objects of policy analysis are value-laden.

For postpositivist theories of policy analysis, the question of coherence is more so about internal coherence; the question is whether their methods are consistent with their ontological and epistemological tenets—tenets that reflect the value-laden nature of the objects of policy analysis. In this sense, the ontological and epistemological tenets held by the three theories representing the three perspectives of the hermeneutic critique are intimately linked to their ability to incorporate a democratic process of decision-making that allows a well-informed decision to be made. This is because one must ask, what is the purpose of stressing the importance of the value-laden nature of policy analysis? As noted, one of the major reasons for acknowledging that value claims (interpretations, meanings, and values) can yield knowledge and stressing the importance of this knowledge in policy analysis, is due to the recognition that the knowledge gained from inquiry into value claims contribute to the process of making an adequately well-informed decision.

Although it is also important to incorporate a democratic process of decision-making in order to ensure that the decision made by the decision-maker(s) reflects the consent of the governed, and helps to legitimize the process of policy development and
implementation as democratic, these criteria does not necessarily apply when determining the coherence of the theories presented. Denying the instrumental use of value claims for these purposes do not necessarily undermine the importance of value claims within the process of analysis, it instead adds to the importance of value claims in the process of analysis for those societies that consider democracy necessary or good. Yet, denying the importance of value claims for the purpose of providing an adequately well informed decision does undermine the importance of the instrumental use of the knowledge gained from value claims, for theories that do not recognize this importance make the ontological and epistemological tenets regarding the importance of value claims a moot point. Thus, the first criterion for determining whether a theory provides a democratic process of decision-making is also an important criterion for determining the internal coherence of the three theories being examined here.

Based on the discussion regarding the challenge of providing a democratic process of decision-making, we can conclude that both Yanow and Fischer provide internally coherent theories of policy analysis. As discussed, Yanow fulfills the criterion of incorporating a democratic process of decision-making that allows for an adequately well-informed decision to be made. She does this through her method of mapping the architecture of discourse relevant to the policy issue. By doing so, she provides the decision-maker(s) with adequate knowledge of the various perspectives within the policy discourse; knowledge that the decision-maker(s) can use to make an adequately well informed decision.

Also based on the prior discussions, Fischer is able to provide an internally coherent theory of policy analysis. He provides a theory of policy analysis structured around four
levels of discourse. Through his final three levels of discourse, Fischer fulfills all three criteria for determining whether a theory successfully incorporates a democratic process of decision-making. By recognizing within these three levels of discourse the possibility of alternative interpretations, meanings, and values, and by providing a space for each perspective not only to be heard, but also to discuss their various perspectives and to come to a consensus or a decision, Fischer not only provides us with a method of policy analysis that is internally coherent, but also provides a theory that is truly democratic.

Also based on prior discussions, we can conclude that Stone's theory of policy analysis is an internally incoherent theory. Although she upholds the ontological and epistemological tenets that policy analysis is value-laden, she fails to recognize the implications of these tenets to her methods because she fails to incorporate a democratic process of decision-making within her theory of policy analysis that provides for an adequately well-informed decision. This leads to a method of policy analysis that, although recognizes the fact that the objects of inquiry for policy analysis is value-laden; thus the nature of policy analysis itself, makes this recognition a moot point. Thus, Stone fails to provide an internally coherent theory.

The Challenge of Policy Analysis as Ideology

The last criticism of positivist policy analysis that this thesis will address is the criticisms that when positivist policy analysis enters into the policy discourse, it does so as an ideological position rooted in specific value claims that entail specific values, meanings, and interpretations. According to Fay, this is due to the fact that: (1) positivist theories are products of modern industrial society and thus reflect the rationale of modern
industrial society; (2) that the values they implicitly instill are those not only of modern
industrial society, but also those of the dominant class of society; and (3) that by
reflecting the values of the dominant class of society, (4) they reify the basic social
institutions and customs of society. Yet, the problem with the ideological character of
positivist policy analysis is not necessarily that it reflects a certain ideology, but more so
that it conceals the fact that it reflects a specific ideological position because it reports its
findings as non-ideological. This problem stems from the positivist tenet that knowledge
is 'objective' in regards to the truth of the statement. The positivist policy analyst claims
that the product of their analysis is true, regardless of any ideological perspective. Thus,
the challenge for the three theories of the hermeneutic critique is to be able to provide a
theory that resolves this problem of the ideological character of policy analysis.

Yanow, Stone, and Fischer all address this issue. For Yanow's theory, the process of
mapping the architecture of the policy discourse resolves the challenge presented by the
positivist's problem of the ideological character of policy analysis. By doing so, her
theory reveals the underlying framework that makes sense of human artifacts, and
inquires into the various value claims held by each community of meaning. Stone and
Fischer also address the challenge presented by the positivist's problem of the ideological
character of policy analysis. They, like Yanow, make the ideological character of policy
analysis explicit by revealing the underlining principles that entail various interpretations,
meanings, and values held by the various communities of meaning, stakeholders, or
alternative analyses. For Stone, this is done not only through the deconstructive process
of revealing the various ideas behind alternative policy analyses, but also during the
process of constructing one's own policy alternative. In the construction of one's own
policy alternative, the analyst is to use various ideas as a foundation for their policy position. Thus, they explicitly reveal their ideological position when they formulate arguments on behalf of their policy alternative and when criticizing alternative policy perspectives.

For Fischer, the ideologies of specific policy alternatives are explicated within his final level of ideological discourse, through the process of social choice. Although this process, according to Fischer, is to be generally undertaken by the political philosopher, he notes that for the policy analyst it is important to “show the ways in which policy analysis is already set in the context of ideological questions and that policy analysts must at minimum be acknowledged consumers of the products of political-philosophical analysis.”

Thus, although policy analysis still reflects the ideologies held by the various communities of meaning, stakeholders, or policy alternatives, all three theories are successful in overcoming the challenge of policy analysis as ideology because they explicitly reveal the various underlying ideological assumptions. Again, the major criticism, as noted above, that leads to the challenge of policy analysis as ideology was not that positivist theories of policy analysis were embedded in an underlying ideological framework, but more so that they denied the ideological nature of their analysis. Unlike positivist theories of policy analysis, the three theories presented do not claim that the resulting analysis is non-ideological, instead they admit to the ideological nature of the resulting analysis. Not only this, but they also explicate the various ideological principles, frames, or ideas underlining the resulting analysis. By doing so, each theory

19 Fischer, Evaluating Public Policy, 172.
successfully resolves the challenge presented by the criticism of positivist policy analysis as ideology.

Summary

In this chapter, the three theories of representing the three perspectives of the hermeneutic critique were evaluated in terms of whether they were able to overcome some of the challenges presented by the criticisms of the general positivist paradigm for policy analysis, and its resulting theories. From the evaluations, we were able to conclude that only Fischer’s theory was able to fully overcome all four of the challenges discussed. Stone’s theory was unable to overcome not only the challenge of providing a democratic process of decision-making, but also the challenge of providing an internally coherent theory.

Stone’s theory was unable to fulfill all three of the criteria presented for determining whether a theory is able to provide for a democratic process of decision-making. Her failure to provide a democratic process of decision-making, specifically the failure to fulfill the first criterion of providing a process of decision-making that allows for an adequately well informed decision to be made, also led to her theory’s inability to overcome the challenge of providing an internally coherent theory. As noted, the internal coherence of a postpositivist theory of policy analysis lies in its ability to provide a method of policy analysis that uses the knowledge gained from value claims in a way that realizes the importance of this knowledge, which had been established by the denial of the ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy. The failure to do
so makes the denial of the ontological and epistemological tenets of a fact-value dichotomy a moot point.

Yanow’s theory was unable to fully overcome the challenge of providing a democratic process of decision making because her theory failed to provide communities of meaning effective roles within the decision-making process. Thus, her theory was unable to fulfill the two criteria of providing a process of decision-making that reflects the consent of the governed or accommodates the right of the citizen to participate in the decision-making process, and one which helps to legitimize the process of policy development and implementation as democratic. Yet, unlike Stone’s theory, Yanow’s theory was still able to overcome the challenge of providing an internally coherent theory. This was specifically due to her theory’s incorporation of a process of decision-making that allowed for an adequately well-informed decision to be made. Thus, although her theory may be inadequate in comparison to theories that are able to fulfill all three criteria of providing a democratic process of decision-making, such as Fischer’s, her theory may still be more viable than Stone’s theory or positivist theories of policy analysis.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Summary of Chapters

In Chapter I, I introduced a brief history of policy analysis. In the broad sense of a scientific revolution, this chapter introduced a brief history of how the positivist paradigm came to be the dominant paradigm within policy analysis, and of how it established a time of normal science for policy analysis. We learned that policy analysis traces back to the ancient times of the Babylonians, ancient Hebrews, Egyptians, as well as ancient groups in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. We also learned that policy analysis had a long history of philosophical, political, historical, and social influences. One major influence was Harold Lasswell, deemed the “Modern Day Founder of Policy Science.” According to Garson, Lasswell presented an “optimistic vision of the possibilities of behavioral methods to serve humanistic ends.” As policy analysis continued to evolve from Laswell’s vision, policy analysis became divided into two generally distinct theoretical camps – positivist and postpositivist policy analysis. In the 1970’s policy analysis in general enjoyed tremendous growth, and during these times, the positivist paradigm became the dominant paradigm for policy analysis.

In Chapter II, we first looked at the various tenets held by the general positivist paradigm for policy analysis. We saw how the positivist paradigm held the ontological

1 Garson, 6.
tenet of the fact-value dichotomy, which led them to the epistemological tenet of the fact-value dichotomy that is rooted in the verification criterion of meaning. This led positivist theories of policy analysis to conclude that knowledge was centered on understanding the universal social laws that may eventually allow one, and society, to control his or her social environment. These tenets, along with the positivist's tenet of the unity of science, led to methodological tenets that provided a framework for policy analysis that was thought to be analogous to the methods of natural science – the framework of rational decision-making. This framework treats values as given by the decision-maker(s), reducible to quantitative analysis, and presupposes that empirical evidence along with the criterion of efficiency can lead to the determination of the 'best' policy alternative.

We also came to understand, given the criticisms of Fay, and later the criticisms of Yanow, Stone, and Fischer, how the tenets of the positivist paradigm for policy analysis failed to take into consideration the value-laden nature of policy analysis. Moreover, regardless of its claim to be able to provide a value-neutral policy analysis, we learned that positivist policy analysis was a political argument—an argument rooted in the ideology of modern industrial society that, intentionally or not, reifies the practices and habits of society's status quo, a status quo that sustains and legitimizes the dominant powers over the oppressed. Thus, the positivist paradigm for policy analysis not only failed to provide a value-neutral analysis, but it is inherently unable to do so.

These criticisms speak specifically of the positivist paradigm's inability to make such anomalies as competing values, interpretations, and meanings to be anticipated and incorporated within its conception of policy analysis. In the broader sense of a scientific revolution, these kinds of criticisms led to a period of crisis for the science of policy
analysis, and led many theorists and practitioners to reject the dominant positivist paradigm for alternative paradigms that were thought to be able to resolve these issues that positivist paradigms were criticized as not being able to resolve. Thus, these kinds of criticisms can also be understood as establishing the pivots on which scientific revolutions turn.

These criticisms also presented specific challenges for alternative paradigms for policy analysis, and their resulting theories. These challenges must be addressed if alternative paradigms are to be able to provide viable alternative theories in contrast to those provided by the dominant positivist paradigm. Thus, in Chapter III, I presented three theories of policy analysis that represented what Morçöl referred to as the most coherent theory stream amongst various postpositivist theories—the theory stream of the hermeneutic critique. According to Morçöl, there are three distinguishable but overlapping perspectives within the hermeneutic critique: the interpretive/hermeneutic perspective, the discourse perspective, and the critical perspective. As a representative of the interpretive/hermeneutic perspective, I offered a summary of Yanow’s interpretive theory of policy analysis. As a representative of the discourse perspective, I offered a summary of Stone’s theory of analysis as craft, and as a representative of the critical perspective, I offered a summary of Fischer’s discursive theory of policy analysis.

As the summaries of each of these theories were presented, I also offered brief comparisons of each of these theories. Much of the overlapping referred to by Morçöl occurs within the ontological and epistemological tenets of the three theories, and their use of hermeneutic methods. These overlaps can be attributed to the notion that all three theories share a similar paradigm for policy analysis—a general postpositivist paradigm.

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Assuming an alternative paradigm to the general positivist paradigm for policy analysis, all three theories deny the ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy, stressing the notion that value claims can yield knowledge.

Methodologically, due to their denial of the ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy, all three theories incorporate hermeneutic methods of inquiry, and focus on quasi-causal modes of explanation of social phenomenon. In the broader view of a scientific revolution, this chapter introduced an alternative paradigm to the positivist paradigm, marking the end of crisis for the science of policy analysis.

From this point we moved on to Chapter IV, in which these three theories were evaluated on whether they, founded upon the same general postpositivist paradigm, were able to adequately overcome the challenges presented by the criticisms of the general positivist paradigm, and its resulting theories. This chapter focused on four major challenges for the general postpositivist paradigm, and its resulting theories. These challenges were: (1) the challenge of overcoming the ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy, (2) the challenge of providing a democratic process of decision-making within their method of policy analysis, (3) the challenge of providing a coherent theory of policy analysis, and (4) the challenge of resolving the problem of policy analysis as ideology.

Within this discussion, we revealed the intimate relationship between the denial of the ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy and the need for providing a democratic process of decision-making that allows for an adequately well-informed decision. This relationship was rooted in the questions concerning the purpose or instrumental use of the knowledge gained from value claims (from inquiry into various
interpretations, values, and meanings), and from the epistemological tenet that knowledge from value claims was most important for the analysis of policy. In this sense, the denial of the ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy entailed the incorporation of a democratic process of decision-making that allowed for an adequately well-informed decision.

One of the conclusions drawn from these discussions was that only Fischer's theory was able to successfully overcome all four of the challenges presented by the criticisms of the general positivist paradigm for policy analysis, and its resulting theories. The reason for this is that only Fischer's theory was able to fully overcome the challenge of providing a democratic process of decision-making, while also overcoming the other three challenges.

Yanow's theory was unable to overcome the challenge of providing a democratic process of decision-making, while being able to overcome the other three challenges. This was due to her theory's failure to fulfill the last two criteria for determining whether a theory provides a democratic process of decision-making: the criterion of ensuring that the decision made reflects the consent of the governed, and the criterion of helping to legitimate the process of decision-making as democratic. Although this was not detrimental to the internal coherence of her theory, it may be detrimental to the likeliness that her theory would be accepted as a viable alternative postpositivist theory in comparison to other alternative postpositivist theories that do fulfill these two criteria.

Stone's theory not only failed to overcome the challenge of providing a democratic process of decision-making, but her theory's inability to do so also led to its failure to overcome the challenge of providing an internally coherent theory. By failing to provide
for a democratic process of decision-making that allowed for an adequately well-informed decision, Stone's theory made the denial of the ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy a moot point. Her theory failed to bring the ontological and epistemological tenets that value claims can produce knowledge to bear important implications for her methods.

It is important to note here that although the three theories presented do share the same general paradigm, this does not mean that the rationalization of the paradigmatic tenets would be the same. As Kuhn notes, "The determination of shared paradigms is not however the determination of shared rules",\(^2\) and as he continues to explain, "[Scientists] can, that is, agree in their identification of a paradigm, without agreeing on, or even attempting to produce, a full interpretation or rationalization of it."\(^3\) Thus, the failures of Yanow's and Stone's theories to overcome all of the challenges presented by the criticisms of positivist theories of policy analysis, may not warrant one to reject the paradigm they use. Instead, it would warrant one to reject Yanow's and Stone's interpretation or rationalization of that paradigm.

Also, the fact that Fischer was able to overcome all of the challenges presented by the criticisms of positivist policy analysis, may not only suggest the possibility of accepting his rationalization of the general paradigm that he shares with Yanow and Stone, but it may also suggest the possibility of accepting the paradigm itself as an adequate alternative to the positivist paradigm for policy analysis.

\(^2\) Kuhn, 43.

\(^3\) Ibid., 44.
Thesis Questions Answered

The primary research question for this thesis asked whether postpositivist theories of policy analysis, specifically theories representing the three perspectives of the hermeneutic critique, were viable alternatives to positivist theories of policy analysis. This question involved questions as to whether (1) the theories, each representing one of the three perspectives of the hermeneutic critique, undertake to overcome the criticisms that positivist theories have been charged. (2) If they did so adequately, then where was this success located? In other words, was their success in overcoming the criticisms that positivist theories have been charged with due specifically to paradigm shifts? (3) If not, at what point did postpositivist theories also succumb to the criticisms faced by positivist theories? And, (4) were these postpositivist theories subject to problems of their own, possibly arising from their alternative paradigm? Yet, within this question, there was a deeper question. Given that these three theories shared the same general paradigm for policy analysis, this thesis was also asking; if postpositivist theories were successful in overcoming the challenges presented by the criticisms of positivist theories, whether this warranted us to reject the positivist paradigm for the general postpositivist paradigm?

It is clear from the summaries of the three theories presented in Chapter III that the three theories representing the three perspectives of policy analysis do undertake the task of overcoming the criticisms that positivist theories have been charged with. Not only this but in Chapter IV, we evaluated whether or not these three theories were in fact able to overcome the challenges presented by the criticism of positivist theories of policy analysis. We concluded that only Fischer's interpretive theory was able to overcome all four of the challenges presented by the criticisms of positivist theories. Yanow's and
Stone's theories failed to overcome either one or two of the challenges, respectively. In comparison, we can establish that the success of Fischer's theory is primarily located in its incorporation of a fully democratic process of decision-making.

This incorporation of a democratic process of decision-making, specifically in that it provides for an adequately well-informed decision, although being a shortcoming of positivist theories as well, was a significant flaw in Stone's theory; a flaw that points to a crucial aspect of not only her theory, but also of postpositivist theories in general. This crucial aspect is that in order to provide an internally coherent theory of policy analysis, postpositivist theories that deny the positivist's ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy, and thereby maintain that policy analysis is a value-laden enterprise, must incorporate a democratic process of decision-making that provides for an adequately well-informed decision within their methods. Thus, Stone's theory is not a viable alternative for policy analysis, although Fischer's and Yanow's theories may be.

This is a problem that is specifically oriented towards postpositivist theories of policy analysis when understood as a problem of internal coherence, since it is only within the general postpositivist paradigm where tenets regarding the value-laden nature of policy analysis are held—especially the tenet regarding the importance of inquiring into value claims, which entail various values, interpretations, and meanings.

Yanow's theory, although being unable to fully overcome the challenge of providing a democratic process of decision-making, was able to provide for a democratic process of decision-making that allowed for an adequately well-informed decision. By doing so, she was also able to provide an internally coherent theory. Therefore, it can be said that her theory may be a viable alternative to positivist theories. Yet, because she fails to fully
overcome the challenge of providing a democratic process of decision-making, her theory may not be a viable alternative in comparison to postpositivist theories that are able to do so.

As mentioned in the prior section, although Yanow’s and Stone’s theories failed to overcome all four of the challenges presented by the criticisms of positivist theories of policy analysis, this is not sufficient proof that the general paradigm they use is not a viable alternative to the positivist paradigm of policy analysis. It may be that the failures are not a result of their paradigmatic tenets, but more so due to the interpretations or rationalizations of these tenets. In comparing Fischer’s theory against Yanow’s and Stone’s theories, this seems to be the case.

In addition, the success of Fischer’s theory of policy analysis may also indicate that the general paradigm that he shares with Yanow and Stone is a viable alternative to the positivist paradigm of policy analysis. Given the proper interpretation or rationalization of these paradigmatic tenets, the general postpositivist paradigm may be able to produce a theory of policy analysis that is more viable than those theories produced by the general positivist paradigm.

Recommendations

The recommendations listed below are recommendations regarding the formulation of adequate theories of policy analysis. These recommendations are products of the evaluative discussions that occurred in Chapter IV, and the answering of the major thesis question in the above sections. They crystallize the lessons learned from this thesis.
1. The Adoption of a General Postpositivist Paradigm

The first recommendation for formulating adequate theories of policy analysis is that theories of policy analysis ought to formulate their theories upon the general postpositivist paradigm; upon the tenets denying the ontological and epistemological tenets of the fact-value dichotomy, the denial of the positivist's version of the unity of science, and the adoption of hermeneutic methods that result in quasi-causal modes of explanation. This recommendation is supported not only by the success of Fischer's theory in overcoming the challenges presented by the criticisms of the positivist paradigm, but also by the positivist paradigm's inability to overcome these challenges.

This shift in ontological, epistemological, and methodological tenets—or in paradigms—is necessitated by the positivist paradigm's inability to incorporate or address value claims that entail multiple interpretations, meanings, and values inherent within policy analysis. As noted in Chapter II, the realization that the objects of policy analysis are inherently value-laden, for the positivist paradigm for policy analysis, is likened to the discovery of anomalies before scientific revolutions. These anomalies that positivist paradigms are unable to provide accounts, also referred to by Kuhn as epistemological counter-instances, "permit the emergence of a new and different analysis of science within which they are no longer a source of trouble." ⁴

In policy analysis, this new and different analysis seems to be framed according to the general postpositivist paradigm used by all three theories representing the three perspectives of the hermeneutic critique. Furthermore, as Kuhn continues, "From a new

⁴ Ibid., 78; Ibid.
theory of scientific knowledge, [the epistemological counter-instances] may seem very much like tautologies, statements of situations that could not conceivably have been otherwise.\textsuperscript{5} This is very much the case for the alternative postpositivist paradigm; understood within the postpositivist paradigm, the notion of policy analysis as value-laden could not conceivably have been otherwise.

2. The Importance of a Democratic Process of Decision-Making

Second, in the interpretation or rationalization of the general tenets of the general postpositivist paradigm—the formulation of a theory—it is recommended that theorists pay close attention to providing a democratic process of decision-making, especially in providing a democratic process of decision-making that allows for an adequately well-informed decision to be made. The failure of Stone’s theory in overcoming the challenge of providing an internally coherent theory of policy analysis was located specifically in her theory’s inability to overcome the challenge of providing a democratic process of decision-making that allows for an adequately well-informed decisions to be made.

I am not assuming that theorists have been overlooking the importance of providing a democratic process of decision-making, for there are numerous authors that address the importance of democracy to policy analysis. What I am doing is simply highlighting the point that the epistemological denial of the fact-value dichotomy entails that a theory of policy analysis provide a method of democratic decision-making that provides for a more informed decision, and that not doing so would result in an internally incoherent theory.

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid.
It is also important that the last two criteria for providing a democratic process of
decision-making be fulfilled, if a postpositivist theory wishes to be competitive with
other postpositivist theories. As we have seen with Yanow's theory, simply providing a
theory that fulfills the first criterion, although resulting in an internally coherent theory,
does not make the theory a viable alternative to postpositivist theories of policy analysis
that also fulfill that last two criteria. Much of the literature in policy analysis, speaks of
the importance of a democratic process of decision-making that ensures that the decision
made by the decision-maker(s) reflects the consent of the governed, and legitimizes the
process of decision-making as democratic. Thus, a theory of policy analysis that only
provides a method of democratic decision-making that leads to an adequately well-
informed decision is not sufficient for it to be accepted as a viable alternative to
postpositivist theories that are able to fulfill all three of the criteria for providing a
democratic process of decision-making. It must provide stakeholders or communities of
meaning an actual effective role in the decision-making process, and contribute to
ensuring the process of decision-making as legitimate.

3. The Problem with Pluralist's Assumptions
of Democracy

A third recommendation, also derived from the discussion regarding the challenge of
providing a democratic process of decision-making, is that theorists ought to be critical of
pluralist assumptions when formulating their theories. As we have seen in Chapter IV,
the failure of Stone's theory in overcoming the three challenges mentioned, was primarily
due to her assumption of a pluralist democracy. And, as the criticisms of Lowi, and
Ingram and Schneider, have shown, the assumptions of pluralist's notions of democracy

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are flawed. It is not true that the forum or process of discourse in current democracies, such as the United States, is ideally democratic, especially because information and power are unequally distributed. Thus the reliance on the pluralist's conceptions of democracy, when formulating a theory of policy analysis, is not advised.
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