Richard Simeon and the Policy Sciences Project

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Introduction

Richard Simeon never believed in "the policy sciences project," so I admit that the title of this contribution to the symposium on his path-breaking synthesis could be considered somewhat misleading. I hope to show, in my defence, that Simeon wrote his 1976 article in the shadow of that project and took pains to distance himself from it. His declared purpose in doing so was "to rescue the study of policy from two or three holes in which it threatens to become stuck" (1976: 549). Two of these "holes" are closely connected to the policy sciences project and to one another: the desire to be politically and socially relevant and the presumption that policy is about problem solving. Simeon strenuously argued that policy is not an exercise in technocratic puzzling or the search for a "solution." As a discipline, political science would be far better off, he argued, setting aside any dubious impulse to be helpful and ensuring instead that politics remains at the centre of the study of public policy.

Simeon need not have worried too much. As he pointed out twenty years after his celebrated essay was published, with the exception of constitutional reform, political scientists in Canada have seldom followed economists into practical policy work (Simeon, 1996). They have focused instead on "policy research," the assessment of policy initiatives and the search for relationships among a wide range of variables. "Policy analysis" bears some similarity to this quest, but the aim of analysis, according to a major text on the topic, is to generate "client-oriented advice relevant to public decisions and informed by social values" (Weimer and Vining, 2011: 24). Inside the several public policy schools that have grown up since Simeon's original essay was published, political scientists wrestle with whether they are to

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engage in policy research or in some of the ameliorative, problem-solving policy analysis that Simeon warned about (Radin, 2013).

No one is more closely associated with the idea of a policy science devoted to problem solving than Harold Lasswell. Lasswell gave birth to the idea of the "policy sciences of democracy," and it is almost certain that he saw himself as the proto-type policy scientist (Farr et al., 2006). Lasswell's own career had been a combination of academic work and policy engagement. He was, in his words, "a sort of roving consultant to public officials" (quoted in Farr et al.: 2006, 580) in offices as disparate as the Department of Agriculture and the Office of War Information. He was no ivory tower theorist but rather a highly engaged academic committed to addressing the social, economic and, especially, political challenges of his time. In short, he represented if not everything then a lot of what Richard Simeon warned against.

For that reason it is somewhat puzzling that in Simeon's essay Lasswell features only as the author of *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How*. It is Yehezkel Dror whom Simeon identifies with the idea that policy making is a technocratic problem-solving enterprise. The choice of Dror as a foil is not without merit. Beryl Radin's history of policy analysis (2013) also chooses Dror as the principal proponent of an engaged and systems-oriented community of policy scholars. But Dror (1967: 199) was highly skeptical about systems analysis (at least on its own), and considered it of "doubtful utility" in the taking of political decisions or the making of public policy. What Dror shared with Lasswell, Robert Merton, Charles Merriam and others was the belief that policy analysis would not progress far without an integration of systems theory, economics, decision theory and public administration. What seems to distinguish Lasswell is his undisguised belief in policy analysts as social scientific heroes (Farr et al., 2006). Comfortable with proximity to power and convinced of the transformative capacity of the policy sciences, it is Lasswell whose project seems to be most at odds with the more cautious and prudent comparative policy agenda that Simeon endorsed.

This paper takes a closer look at the Simeon-Lasswell divide beginning with those topics on which they were clearly in agreement. It turns then to the areas in which these authors parted ways and explores some of the reasons. The paper concludes with a discussion of contemporary schools of public policy where the tension between Lasswell's aggressive and somewhat grandiose vision and Simeon's prudential admonitions are played out on a daily basis.

Simeon and Lasswell in Agreement

Simeon set out to critique the study of public policy by political scientists and provide some advice for future research. Two of Simeon's critical

Abstract. In his classic 1976 article on the state of policy studies in Canada, Richard Simeon explicitly warned against following the path toward a policy science. Simeon was suspicious of the normative agenda embedded in the policy sciences project and worried that it would submerge politics in a broader set of interdisciplinary concerns. Was Simeon right? The policy sciences have not developed the way their principal proponent, Harold Lasswell, had anticipated or hoped, but neither has the study of public policy developed exactly as Simeon advocated. Both Lasswell and Simeon believed strongly in an empirical orientation and Lasswell, more than Simeon, focused on creating a tool kit of techniques. Schools of public policy have moved beyond both critique and technique to estimate risk, ameliorate error and mobilize knowledge. This new agenda requires students of public policy to acquire and employ practical knowledge steeped in the particular and instructed by policy narratives.

Résumé. Dans son article désormais classique de 1976 sur l'état des études sur les politiques publiques au Canada, Richard Simeon mettait explicitement en garde contre la tentation de prendre le chemin menant à une science des politiques publiques. Simeon se méfiait du programme normatif inscrit dans le projet d'une science des politiques et craignait qu'il submergerait la politique dans un ensemble plus vaste de préoccupations de nature interdisciplinaire. Simeon, avait-il raison? Les sciences des politiques publiques n'ont pas évolué dans le sens où l'avait anticipé ou espéré Harold Lasswell, leur principal promoteur, mais l'étude des politiques publiques ne s'est pas développée non plus exactement comme l'avait préconisé Simeon. Aussi bien Lasswell que Simeon croyaient fermement en une orientation empirique. Lasswell, plus que Simeon, s'est appliqué à créer une boîte à outils de techniques. Les écoles de politiques publiques ont dépassé autant la critique que la technique afin d'évaluer le risque, de corriger l'erreur et de mobiliser les connaissances. Ce nouveau programme exige des étudiants en politiques publiques l'acquisition et l'emploi de connaissances pratiques ancrées dans le particulier et dictées par l'exposé des réalités politiques.

observations are ones that Lasswell and his followers would have no difficulty endorsing, namely, that policy analysis had become too closely linked with public administration and that the case study method was not producing adequate returns on investment.

Of public administration Simeon (1976: 549) simply observed that its practitioners were too taken with the search for more efficient managerial tools and cost effective "solutions." Public administration, whatever its redeeming qualities, was preoccupied with the inner workings of government and insufficiently attentive to the broader environment of values and ideologies, power and conflict. Other critics were far less gentle. Heinz Eulau, writing on the policy sciences at roughly the same time, described public administration as an "intellectual wasteland" characterized by "specious scientism" and "naïve reformism" (1977: 421).

As for case studies, Simeon thought that even the best of them tended to be "isolated and unique," too readily absorbed with minutiae and inattentive to broad patterns. Policy sciences advocates agreed. In setting out the terms of a policy science of democracy, Lasswell made clear his affinity for "the creative use of models in scientific work" (1951: 9). The policy

world would only achieve its promise, Lasswell believed, when academic specialists gave their ideas "the necessary systematization" (13).

It is doubtful that Simeon would have ever used Lasswell's language, or offered a grand depiction of the possibilities of policy work, but he did not reject the scientific aspirations of policy research. The canons of science, in particular their empirical foundations, were endorsed by Simeon and by many others of his generation. But, as Simeon argued, collecting data, whether in the form of case studies or spending estimates, was pointless without "a theory which would account for the correlations" (1976: 553) and show how differences in environments translated into differences in policy. Lasswell and his followers were similarly enamoured of systematic empirical analysis, although chiefly for the role it played in informing the judgment of policy advisors. Whereas Simeon did not confront directly the question of what all this knowledge is for, Lasswell was convinced that knowledge opens up policy alternatives, reduces the likelihood of mistakes and contributes to good judgment on that part of decision makers.

For Lasswell the spirit and promise of scientific inquiry was expressed in "the competent pursuit of empirically verifiable knowledge" (1971: 114). This formulation, and the entire scientific agenda Lasswell espoused, invited the criticism that he embraced the positivist conviction that facts and values exist in separate realms. And it appears that he did. But the fact-value distinction was, for Lasswell, a philosophical one, not a boundary that could never be crossed in the service of democracy or human dignity. Lasswell's overarching goal of enhancing human dignity was not derived from the facts, but Lasswell believed that systematic, factual knowledge helps clarify and confirm goals (Lasswell and McDougal, 1992). Lasswell's project was scientific in that it was systematic and empirical, but it was also pragmatic in that it valued practical action devoted to justifiable ends as the appropriate motivation for science.

Simeon's commitment to empiricism was, if anything, even stronger than Lasswell's, if only because Simeon seemed intent on avoiding direct confrontation with normative argumentation. He was, somewhat surprisingly for the time, a supporter of the highly quantitative comparative studies of state expenditure pioneered in the United States and replicated in studies of social policy in Europe. His main complaint about those studies was not their empirical ambitions but their theoretical insipidness. Simeon wanted "theoretically relevant categories, typologies, or classifications of the dimensions of public policy" (1976: 553). These would lead, he believed, to an ability to link up variables in a "funnel of causality," a conventionally positivist conception of policy dynamics that has nonetheless enjoyed remarkable staying power. Values and ideologies were clearly part of the funnel and should be studied to estimate their effects, but the fact-value dividing line was not one that Simeon was prepared to cross. Success, for

Simeon, lay in accounting for why certain policy options are chosen. Policy analysts, by contrast, "operate with quite different standards of success, which reflect the essentially normative character of the profession" (Radin, 2013: 5). Where Lasswell imagined the policy sciences engaged in practical problem-oriented action, Simeon saw in an action orientation the danger of politicizing the academic study of public policy.

Politics and the Policy Process

Harold Lasswell distinguished famously between "knowledge *of* and knowledge *in* the decision processes of public and civic order" (1951: 1). Knowledge *of* implies systematic empirical studies ("the discipline of careful observation"). Like Simeon, Lasswell wanted to move beyond aphorisms, general impressions and inherited wisdom.

Knowledge *in* the decision processes is a more complicated idea. Lasswell clearly wanted the policy sciences to be "problem oriented," to contribute to the clarification of goals, to the identification of trends and the mapping of alternatives. But to do that well one has to be inside the process. Policy as seen objectively is important, but for Lasswell knowledge was ultimately contextual. To understand policy, you have to be a participant in some manner, immersed in the process without becoming captured by it (Torgerson, 1985: 245). Empiricism is a critical ingredient, but for Lasswell the purpose of the policy sciences was not to discover general laws or to predict the future. The policy professional "shares the scientist's disciplined concern for the empirical" but is "searching for an optimum synthesis of the diverse skills that contribute to a dependable theory and practice of problem solving in the public interest" (1971: 13).

Simeon accepted the distinction between seeking an improved understanding of the policy process and actually improving it but wanted no part of the latter enterprise. An all-out focus on policy analysis in this latter sense would, he worried, drive political science into "the realm of normative problems and social engineering" (Van Dyke quoted in Simeon, 1976: 554). Describing this as "a prospect most undesirable," Simeon went on to say that providing advice on policy alternatives deflects us from the more important job, which is "to understand politics more generally" (1976: 550).

There can be little doubt that part of Simeon's aversion to the search for "better" policies was rooted in a suspicion that the deck was stacked in favour of a narrow definition of "better," namely "policy which is more rational, cost effective, efficient, and so on…" (1976: 550). In that regard, Simeon was surely correct. Utilitarian and economistic criteria were, and continue to be, touchstones for governments in search of increased productivity in a world of sceptics and critics. Some of the most influential textbooks on public policy are devoted to examining the rationale for

government intervention and the criteria to be used in assessing costs and benefits (see Weimer and Vining, 2011). Of course, it is not at all clear that systematic and empirically grounded policy work is welcomed or employed by decision makers. In fact, for critics of government failure the unwillingness of politicians to embrace cost-benefit analysis and its variants is at the heart of policy disappointments (Schuck, 2014). As Ray Pawson (2006) has wryly observed, the appetite for evidence and evaluation inside government is disappointingly meagre.

Besides, as Simeon and others have argued, the problem solving approach that Lasswell and his followers urged on us, presumes consensus on what constitutes a "problem." If we all agree that homelessness is a problem or that overfishing is a problem, then we can unleash the tools of policy analysis and harvest the fruits of our efforts. But agreement exists on these matters only at the most abstract and superficial level. The definitional terrain is highly contested, as generations of political scientists can attest. Policy, from a political science point of view, is about tracing the battle to define problems and the consequences of various solutions.

Defining policy problems, framing them and constructing policy agendas is fundamentally about the exercise of political power (Stone, 2002). Differences among frames are not readily adjudicated (Dryzek, 1993: 222); they are subject instead to persuasion and bargaining with consequent conflict between winners and losers. And the political battle is ongoing. In an article written at about the same time as "Studying Public Policy," Rein and Wright made the point this way: "We have a political process precisely because people have multiple goals that somehow must be reconciled into a single course of governmental action. This resultant course of action might be called a 'policy,' but that term is misleading if it is regarded as implying one mind, one will and one theory" (1977: 123).

How could Lasswell disagree? His famous book, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How?* (1958) provided, in its title, a handy definitional aid for those who were attracted to the idea of portraying politics as a struggle over limited "values," including "deference, income and safety." This brutally realistic volume begins with a definition of politics that stresses how elites appropriate most of these "values" and "the mass" gets what is left. The remainder of the book is a tour of 150 years of this kind of politics in action.

And yet Lasswell, this astute student of *realpolitik*, is vulnerable to Simeon's argument that the policy sciences are technocratic rather than political in inspiration. Defined broadly as the application of specialized knowledge, technique presumes of an "armoury of skills," the tools "appropriate to enlightened decision" (Lasswell, 1971: 123–24). They are at the core of Lasswell's project, but framed this way technique sounds purely instrumental and decidedly bloodless. Just as Frank Underhill once dismissed economists as the "garage mechanics of capitalism," Simeon saw policy

analysts, imbued with the latest models and methods, as "technologists" employed to invent decision aids. Lasswell, unlike Simeon, never worried that "advisers" would try to drain policy of all its conflictual elements and leave us with technical problems amenable solely to technical solutions. For Lasswell, contextual knowledge, including knowledge of the self and knowledge of the political conditions that bear on decisions, was a necessary adjunct to empirical and analytical capacity. But Lasswell's emphasis on skills and tools certainly created the impression that politics could be tamed, and order created, by the artful use of analytical expertise.

Lasswell was by no means alone in reasoning this way. By the time he wrote, the idea of removing politics from its central role in public policy had been around for at least fifty years. From the American Progressive movement, with its focus on the political machines that controlled the burgeoning cities of the early twentieth century, to the public choice advocates whose indictment of the state included empire building bureaucrats and mendacious politicians, politics in the United States has routinely been portrayed as a blight on public policy. For public choice theorists the answer to rampant rent seeking has been to shrink the state and then imprison it inside a series of heavily policed boundaries. Progressives wanted the state back but driven by the principles of scientific management. Chaotic and corrupt processes would be brought to heel using scientific methods while rigorous data collection and its scientific management would tame political irrationality (Fischer, 1990).

In Canada the idea of a systems/cybernetic analysis of society enjoyed fleeting fame during the first Trudeau government (1968–1972). Pierre Trudeau's approach to governing resembled Lasswell's in its belief that technology and science would conquer the world of human relations and supply us with policy devoid of what Trudeau called "emotionalism" (1968: 203). This approach manifested itself in the reorganization of central agencies designed to mobilize knowledge and bring it to bear strategically in the policy process (Aucoin, 1986). But by 1976 the bloom was off the rationalist rose. Social movements in support of women, Aboriginals and gays had begun to contest policy in post-positivist terms, stressing rights and equality rather than costs and benefits (Pal, 1996: 363). The Trudeau government remained committed to rational policy making, but it would be driven not by systems analysts but by pragmatists like Marc Lalonde, who epitomized both technocratic and political acumen.

The combination of technology and politics, at least democratic politics, is easier to reconcile in practice than in theory. While Lasswell proclaimed a commitment to democracy, and particularly the goal of reducing power differentials, critics were suspicious. Lasswell's definition of democracy was hard to pin down (Farr et al., 2008) and his commitment to democracy struck some as being at odds with his emphasis on the

importance of expertise in the policy process. John Dryzek went as far as to suggest that "most policy analysis efforts to date are in fact consistent with an albeit subtle policy science of tyranny" (1989: 98). Tyranny, in this case, suggests the construction of policy that is insensitive to what ordinary people want; it also implies commitment to the "right" course of action regardless of democratic processes.

Authentic politics, the kind that Simeon argued should be central to the study of policy, is not a search for "the truth," it is an open-ended struggle for authority and voice among those with rival interests and different beliefs (Montpetit, 2016: 5–6). Or, as John Gray puts it, "politics is the art of devising temporary remedies for recurring evils—a series of expedients, not a project of salvation" (2009: 3). For Simeon the study of the political arts takes us into the policy realm, where the struggle for power finds temporary expression and sometimes extended resolution. Public policy thereby becomes a natural extension of the core ambitions of political science—a way of understanding politics, not a route to a better world.

For Lasswell, truth's elusiveness is best met with a full scale assault deploying the tactics and tools of a wide variety of disciplines, not just political science. But political science would fare well in this world. In fact, Lasswell (1956) believed political science would emerge as "the policy science par excellence," if only because the issues it addressed—war and peace, poverty and prosperity—have huge stakes (Farr et al., 2006: 580). Simeon was more circumspect, but he acknowledged that political science did have a role to play in advising on constitutional politics, a project in which he himself was deeply engaged. Similarly, in the aftermath of the sponsorship scandal, political scientists were major interpreters of the constitutional implications of various schemes to improve accountability. Institutional issues—electoral reform, judicial appointments, federalism, and parliamentary government—have all benefited from academic engagement. Can political science contribute to the emerging problems of public policy that take us beyond macro-institutional design?

The Evolution of Policy Problems

Since Simeon and Lasswell provided us with their agendas for public policy, the challenges facing policy makers and policy theorists have increased in complexity. Political science continues to focus on an institutional agenda, much of it informed by democratic theory, but the challenge now is to link that agenda to the bigger questions of policy change. That challenge requires modifying early change models that were based heavily on incrementalist assumptions and incorporating the insights of historical institutionalism (see Mahoney and Thelen, 2015) and models of change based on the idea of punctuated equilibrium (Jones and

Baumgartner, 2005). The need for Simeon's theoretically informed categories remains, but as other contributors to this symposium make clear, the empirical methods of the 1970s have been eclipsed by much more sophisticated research techniques and a new wave of data analytics.

At the same time, in the real world of public policy, analysts confront problems of much greater scope and connectivity than either Simeon or Lasswell imagined. Government departments remain, but tight policy categories are harder to come by. In their place, and in place of the case studies Simeon found so self-limiting, we have developed the study of policy networks in which governmental agencies and civil society organizations engage one another in policy work that ranges from problem recognition to programme implementation (Pal, 2014: 232–47). Students of public policy have also been obliged, in part as a result of their network focus, to unearth and interrogate the concept of governance with its expansive perspective on the distribution and contestation of authority. And while it may seem as if the recruitment and deployment of new concepts like these is a way of moulding our understanding of the policy process, it is probably more accurate to describe them as a desperate attempt to keep up with the scale of policy challenges and the erosion of faith in policy elites.

In this regard, the rationality project, with which both Lasswell and Simeon were associated, has confronted its limits. These are not just the limits of a means-ends rationality that postmodernists have critiqued with such skill, but the limits of our cognitive capacity to manage the political challenges policy problems pose. We are repeatedly told that ours is a world replete with "wicked" or "insoluble" problems that pose massive co-ordination challenges. So called "structured problems" (widely understood and technically tractable) have given way to problems in which scientific knowledge is deficient or contested, and little consensus exists on the appropriate values and norms to be employed in seeking solutions (Hoppe, 2011: 70–79). Foreign direct investment is an example of a semi-structured problem: technically tractable but without a strong consensus around the values and dangers of foreign ownership. Climate change is an "unstructured problem," one in which both facts and values are contested.

These kinds of problems highlight the limits not only of means-ends rationality, but of both epistemic and technical knowledge. Regardless of the amount of evidence we gather, there are distinct limits to our capacity to understand and agree on the full dimensions of unstructured problems and the likely impact of our actions (or lack thereof) in response to them. No matter what "tools" we may have invented to discipline our thought processes or provide us with optimal solutions to well organized problems, they cannot substitute for value rationality, that is the collective deliberation on, and choice of, rational goals (Flyvbjerg, 2001).

Both Lasswell and Simeon were comfortable advocating the generation of epistemic knowledge (*episteme*) and Lasswell was certainly at

home with the pragmatic application of technical knowledge to well understood problems (*techne*). Neither seems to have reflected much on *phronesis*, Aristotle's term for practical knowledge, the ability to sense the appropriate response to particular conditions or circumstances. The cultivation of good judgment was not part of the study of public policy for Simeon, and even observations of poor judgment seem a distant concern. What was important for Simeon was the investigation of patterns of public policy, not the pursuit of good public policy.

Lasswell comes closer. He was comfortable with the tension between advisor and practitioner and with the translation of information into practical knowledge, including self-knowledge. True, his focus on tools and techniques sometimes created the impression that for him policy is really a technical question whose resolution awaits better ways to canvass opinion, analyze costs and benefits and implement choices. But Lasswell was aware, as Simeon would have been as well, of Kaplan's "law of the instrument" (1964), the observation that to someone with a hammer every problem looks like a nail. Technological fixes do not travel well; applied without care for context and therefore appropriateness, they produce disappointing and often miserable results.

Lasswell would have agreed with Bobrow (1977) that policy is all about explicating hard choices. Explication involves understanding that there are bound to be conflicts, distributional consequences of choices and more or less desirable outcomes. Uncertainty abounds and governments do not seem to know what is going on. Under these circumstances it seems sensible to embrace all kinds of techniques but be aware that policy problems do not wait for techniques to be perfected, and techniques do not provide answers. The latter come from knowledge of the particular. As Flyvbjerg (2001: 57) points out, *phronesis* focuses on what is variable not what is amenable to universal laws or rules. The idea that practical knowledge is exercised in recognition of the special circumstances of time and place helps to rescue case studies from the dustbin of methodologies. Although Simeon, and contemporaries such as Hugh Heclo (1972), never entirely scorned case studies, case studies were continuously faulted for their inability to supply general, theoretical knowledge. From the perspective of practical knowledge that is of little concern; the rich narratives case studies provide are the irreplaceable building blocks of practical knowledge.

Of course, a cascade of case studies will not give us a theory of practical knowledge. On the other hand, since Simeon and Lasswell considered the study of public policy, we have developed a heightened sense of public policy gone wrong, or the absence of practical knowledge (Atkinson, 2013; Baron, 1998). Policy failures (or successes) are best appreciated as narratives in which the ability (or inability) of decision makers to overcome cognitive biases is played out on an improving (or deteriorating) policy

landscape. Cognitive neuroscience holds significant promise for helping us understand how the brain works, how reasoning functions might be improved, but mostly how our emotional and intuitive selves can be developed (Theile, 2006). The resulting skills—the ability to anticipate reactions, empathize with others and cultivate a refined moral sensibility—are not among those that Lasswell stressed over sixty years ago when he imagined a science of public policy. Nor did Richard Simeon see any particular need to understand them to explain public policy. However, no policy professional can afford to ignore these skills, and the training of policy analysts using case study narratives increasingly requires them.

Policy Schools and the Policy Professional

In Canada, the United States and many other OECD countries, the preparation of students for policy careers has passed, to some degree, from the disciplines of political science and economics to schools of public policy. Most departments of political science continue to teach courses on public policy, but they have generally been persuaded by the Simeon admonition to steer clear of openly advocating improvements in the policy process. Criticism is aimed as much at weak conceptual constructs as it is at poor policy outcomes. Public policy and public administration still feature as subfields in political science, but the centre of gravity for the study of public policy and administration has moved to the graduate level and to dedicated schools of public policy that now populate the academic landscape from Dalhousie to Victoria.

Canadian policy schools have adopted a similar trajectory to that found in the United States, with a lag of about 40 years (Geva-May and Maslove, 2007). It would be a stretch to suggest that Harold Lasswell inspired all of these developments, but there is no question that policy schools in both countries increasingly resemble one another in their interdisciplinarity, their focus on employing a wide variety of methodological tools and their habit of recruiting former or current policy practitioners into leadership and teaching roles. Most important, these schools are all dedicated to graduating students who are drawn to public service and seek to make a contribution to public policy. The Maxwell School at Syracuse University was created as early as the 1920s on the premise that careers in public service require special training. At Berkeley, the Goldman School was founded in 1969 with the aim of supplying a "new type of graduate education, fostering the vision, knowledge and practical skills to empower a new generation of policy makers." Its faculty included several economists known for their interest in public management. It also included Eugene Bardach (2011), author of *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*, a small how-to handbook described accurately as "a distillation of the policy analysis methods."

While Harold Lasswell wrote little or nothing about policy schools, it seems likely that he would have welcomed their development and spread. After all, Lasswell sought a new breed of policy analysts who, like himself, would apply their skills to the public problems he was sure everyone could agree on. Whether policy schools could produce those analysts was by no means a certainty. Wildavsky, in describing the early days of Berkeley's school, observed that policy schools are meliorative, "seeking to move away from known bads rather than toward grandiose goods," and parochial, "they do not study the whole but the parts" (1985: 35). As such their goals are more modest than the Lasswellian agenda suggests they should be. To the extent that policy schools continue to invest in the public management tools inspired by microeconomics (Mintrom, 2007) they remain vulnerable to the idea that they are indulging in "flawed statecraft" and neglecting the "big questions" (Durant, 2016; Roberts, 2016). Richard Simeon's reaction to the growth of policy schools is not a matter of public record, but it seems likely that he too would have welcomed their development as long as political scientists were prominent, or even predominant, figures within them. As for training the next generation of public servants, here we approach the very task that Simeon was so leery about with respect to public policy studies in general: their engagement with improving the quality of public policy. Simeon himself noted, somewhat wryly, that when he assumed the leadership of Queen's School of Public Administration in 1985, he inherited a mandate to train future public servants, a slightly uncomfortable prospect given his "purist academic position" on the matter of providing policy advice (1996: 376–77).

As for Harold Lasswell, he was always a political scientist first and foremost. He prophesized that in the realm of policy studies political science would be the primary discipline, even though policy work was fundamentally interdisciplinary in nature. "It might appear," Lasswell opined, "that political scientists ought to restrict themselves to working with fellow professionals, public officials and political leaders. Such an interpretation is mistaken" (1974: 188). In a democracy, policy knowledge will come from all quarters, not least citizens themselves. Besides, much of the empirics associated with public policy will be generated by disciplines far removed from social science. Microbiologists can inform forestry policy, biochemists health policy and engineers our policies on infrastructure. And while Lasswell did not reflect much on the curriculum that would deliver the skills he attributed to the policy professional, today's policy schools teach financial management, strategic management and human resource management, all of them as technical adjuncts to the empirical knowledge that good policy requires.

Knowledge *of* the policy process, the first half of Lasswell's formulation, remains the redoubt of political science or, more precisely, public administration. In Canada, public administration has come to focus on

defending the neutral and competent public servant and documenting organizational changes that threaten this species of policy actor. The ever-shifting border between state and civil society is also a persistent topic as is the development of policy networks. The study of administrative reforms, many of them embodied in the "new public management," is now anchored by a growing body of literature that seeks to connect these changing institutional arrangements to policy outcomes in ways that Simeon and others were eager to develop. It must be conceded, however, that economists have made major contributions as well. Their faith in institutional solutions to collective action problems has even outpaced that of political scientists, and their ability to theorize and study institutional and policy patterns has been path breaking (see Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012).

But it is in the realm of knowledge *in* the policy process that economists have established the widest and deepest beachhead. As Simeon pointed out, "economists, as we often lament, have had enormously more influence on policy than we [political scientists] have" (1996: 377). It turns out that politicians and citizens are very interested in policies that are efficient and effective. The criteria that Simeon despaired of are at the centre of policy studies within the state. As discredited as the social welfare model has become at the hands of policy analysis critics like Bobrow and Dryzek (1987), the criteria it champions continue to represent an easily understood and easily agreed-upon basis on which policy should be constructed (Werner and Vining, 2011). It seems that everyone, regardless of ideological outlook, is in favour of reducing waste (efficiency); everyone would like "policies that work" (effectiveness). The contemporary pressure for evidence-based policy is driven in part by a desire to choose policies that have these features and avoid those that encourage rent seeking, the allegedly ubiquitous competition for artificially contrived transfers (Tollison, 1982).

Political scientists have something to offer on these topics, but they must share the academic space with economists who have placed the concept of "cost" at the centre of their treatment of policy options (Wildavsky, 1979: 174–80). As for the topics that political science can lay claim to—those that Simeon argued should be at the core of our appreciation of public policy—namely power and conflict, these are not always central to interpretations of public policy (Moe, 2005). On the other hand politicians do understand power, or at least they believe they understand it well enough to doubt that they have much to learn from academics. What politicians are looking for in the policy realm are subject matter experts, people who know something about specific programmes, their costs, their coverage and their effectiveness. Politicians seek knowledge about how to achieve objectives rather than advice about which objectives to achieve (Lindvall, 2009)

Analysts supplying this kind of information are jacks-of-all-trades. They engage not only in assembling information and briefing superiors

on policy issues but also in operational work and service delivery (Howlett, 2009; Wellstead and Stedman, 2010). For these reasons, the curriculum in most policy schools reflects a wide range of skills that are presumed to be valued in this talent market, including accounting, project management, programme evaluation and human resource management. On none of these topics does the discipline of political science have much to offer, at least not directly. Political science continues to heed Simeon's admonition to "understand politics more generally," but this emphasis does not fully meet the demand for policy and administration centred on managing effectively and efficiently.

As Simeon would be quick to point out, and Lasswell would surely agree, there are other considerations than efficiency and effectiveness, legitimacy for one, that are much closer to the core of politics. Values that knit communities together are worth studying and supporting. So are those connected with human dignity, Lasswell's summary phrase for the ultimate object of the policy sciences. Simeon (1976: 557) suggested that empirical theorizing should be organized around issues of persistent normative concern such as political equality and democratic participation. His own work reflects that commitment. Simeon was quite prepared to assess federalism, his principal institutional preoccupation, in terms of whether it supplied a measure of social justice or denied citizens the opportunity to benefit from "progressive" centralized government (Simeon, 2006). His verdict on federalism—that it was slightly biased against egalitarianism, more congenial towards minority rights and presented obstacles to the will of democratic majorities—is an example of his willingness to bend empirical research toward abiding normative issues.

Policy schools face a similar task of supporting policy research (and analysis) that is attuned to societal problems. These schools have also responded to the challenge of creating public value by developing professional policy analysts who can combine political neutrality and technical competence with a refined understanding of the demands of the local and the particular. In this respect, Lasswell's contextualism (Torgerson, 1985) provides some traction. Being creative means understanding what is called for at the moment, under specific constraints, to accomplish longer-term goals. That does not mean giving in to the temptation to refine political skills for competitive purposes. Lasswell makes the point: "It is not our job to supply the working politician with what he knows already, namely, a bag of electoral and other manipulative tricks" (1956: 966). The job of policy schools is to educate professionals in the nature and particulars of the policy world and to help them to function effectively in complex organizations. Only some of these skills are amenable to direct instruction, although policy schools increasingly use case studies to simulate situations in which practical skills can be acquired and used.

All policy schools are aware of the need to convey certain "facts" about how policy is made (*episteme*); all of them purport to teach skills that will be

required of practitioners who are consuming if not producing technical information (*techne*). The result is a curriculum that focuses on the rules and principles that should be followed as aids to rational decision making. However, rules are no substitute for judgment, and, while it is dangerous to flaunt rules, it is equally dangerous to pretend that they are the beginning and end of what a policy professional needs to know. That is why every policy school would benefit from a curriculum in which practical knowledge (*phronesis*) is nurtured. In this way an understanding of the politics of public policy can take us beyond the idea of politics as a constraint on rationality to the point that it can be a contributor to the amelioration of public problems.

Conclusion

In 1976 Richard Simeon looked back over twenty years of policy studies in Canada and provided a trenchant assessment of the good, the bad and the ugly. He warned against attaching the enterprise to the policy sciences project and argued strenuously for an empiricism that would help us understand the politics in public policy rather than make us better servants of those in power.

Students of public policy, whether resident in policy schools or in departments of political science, have generally heeded Simeon's warnings. Put another way, the ideals embedded in Lasswell's policy sciences of democracy have not taken hold even in the most favourable conditions (DeLeon, 2006; Farr et al., 2006). To some degree it has been a matter of demand. The demand for technically sound, evidence-based policy advice is more limited than Lasswell imagined, in part because the quality of that advice has been uneven (DeLeon, 1988: 98) and in part because evidence is not always a welcome ingredient from the perspective of decision makers. In Canada, Conservative politicians depleted an earlier reservoir of policy advice (Howlett, 2009), with very little impact on the popularity of their policies. Don Drummond, reflecting on bygone times in the federal public service, claimed that by the early 2000s the state of policy analysis had become "dismal" (2011: 342). Of course, the current demand for policy can change rather rapidly as the advent of the Justin Trudeau government shows. New governments sometimes evince an appetite for policy work as a means of throwing off old policy frames and courting different directions.

As for the supply of policy advice, political scientists devoted to policy issues have concentrated on discovery and critique. The comparative method that Simeon championed remains central to the enterprise, albeit in increasingly refined forms. And because governments expect to learn and borrow from one another, political scientists can supply much needed

synthesis and context. In this important sense the Simeon agenda remains as relevant as ever. Note, however, that governments sift through the supply of public policy, not because they are curious but because they want to perform better or avoid error. These are not their only motives, but from the perspective of government, public policy has a normative dimension that political science needs to appreciate if not shape.

Policy schools have an additional, self-defined, normative task, namely to supply governments with aspiring public servants trained in the political arts of assessment and decision. That training has become increasingly defined by the acquisition of particular competencies, including so-called "soft skills," those associated with human relations and social psychology (Prince, 2007). In the world of public policy schools, problem solving is not about discovering the best solution, as Lasswell might have put it, as much as it is developing and testing theories of decision making that can be used to underpin the exercise of good judgment. In policy schools, good judgment cannot be a matter of indifference and good government merely a point of comparative reference. Both are the subject of disagreement and debate, to be sure, but the enterprise is not solely empirical. The values of researchers are noticeably on display. On balance, it is hard to think that Richard Simeon would object to that.

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