

# Letters

## Policy Process Model Defended

In the June issue of *PS* Paul Sabatier contributed two interesting articles that surveyed work in policy studies. While celebrating certain advances in the field he deplored continued use of the policy process model, which he sees contributing to the lack of respect political scientists purportedly have for policy scholars.

The principal shortcoming of the policy process model, according to Sabatier, is that it is not a causal theory. Thus he calls for the development of causal theories and discerns some potential in four areas of contemporary empirical theory development. I question whether the policy process model is an unsatisfactory basis for theorizing.

The claim of the policy process model is the claim that policy is made in a series of stages that must occur in a particular order. As with any model, the policy process model points to certain features of experience and discerns certain patterns, neglecting others. Until a total theory of politics is developed it is inappropriate to criticize a theory or model for what it neglects as long as it makes a significant contribution to knowledge. The policy process model could be criticized by demonstrating (a) that policies are made in ways that do not follow the stages, or (b) that the stages are defined so loosely that it is impossible to falsify the model. The first criticism involves presenting counterexamples. The second criticism involves arguing that the theory is so vague as to make it impossible to present counterexamples. Sabatier cites one study and claims there are others that falsify the policy process model. It would appear the model is falsifiable; policy scholars will need to decide whether such instances are mere anomalies that should be tolerated for the time being, or whether they justify discarding the model.

As stated, Sabatier's primary complaint regarding the policy process

model is that it is not a causal theory. The claim that there is a direct causal relation between two events, A and B, is the claim that whenever A occurs it will be followed by B. Often the sorts of multi-causal relations social scientists consider are such that the occurrence of A makes the occurrence of B more likely. The claim that M and N are stages of a process is the claim that whenever N occurs it has been preceded by M. Causal relations and process relations (understood as consisting of a series of stages) are different, but both assert a necessary connection between discrete events. I find the claim that N is always preceded by M at least as informative as the claim that the occurrence of A makes B more likely.

It is premature to evaluate the four theoretical approaches Sabatier surveys. As these approaches are developed they will be subjected to the tests of counterexamples and falsifiability. They do lack the distinctive elements that process models possess—temporal ordering. Each identifies various factors that influence decisions; all conceptualize policy making as a system or as taking place within a system, rather than as a process consisting of stages; the order in which the incidents, attributes, actors, or coalitions occur/act to influence policy outcomes is not specified.

Policy scholars are certainly justified in researching causal relations in policy making. They need not discard the policy process model when doing so. I suspect the next generation of policy scholars will still be using it.

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## Reply to Parenti

Michael Parenti's letter in regard to our article in rotation in office (*PS*, March/June, 1991) might have been entitled, "I smell a rat."

Parenti finds our position so sullied by association, given the support expressed by George Bush and Dan Quayle for term limitation, that he dismisses the article's arguments summarily. They neglect essence for form, says he, the essence being a conservative plot to sweep away the liberals and left progressives who are finally advancing via the seniority system into powerful committee chairs.

Although Dr. Parenti's place on the political spectrum is at some distance from our own, we have high regard for his scholarship. Thus we cite his *Democracy for the Few*, 4th ed., p. 334, where he explains the dynamics of power that compel incumbents to resist fundamental change. "The first intent of most officeholders is not to fight for social change but to survive and prosper," says Parenti, and survival requires reelection. Consequently, he continues, incumbents tend to respond to group *demands* rather than group *needs*. Collective needs will only get a hearing if they are convertible into demands through political "buying power." Therefore, concludes Parenti, the "wants of the unorganized public seldom becomes imperatives to which officials find it in their own interest to respond. . . ."

We agree. The system sensitizes the congressional ear to demands articulated by well financed lobbies and prominent special interest groups, many of whom are the puppets of plutocrats. We would also concur, however, with one of the most active members of the 1787 Convention which framed the Constitution, George Mason. Ultimately Mason refused to sign the new Constitution, in part because it failed to provide for rotation in office. Said Mason:

Nothing is so essential to the preservation of a Republican government as a periodic rotation. Nothing so strongly impels a man to regard the interests of his constituents as the certainty of returning to the general mass of the people, from whence he was taken,

where he must participate in their burdens.

Congressmen today no longer feel that certainty of returning to the general mass of the people. Incumbents heed primarily the constituents who are wealthy and/or powerful enough to have an appreciable effect on the outcome of a reelection bid so that they, the incumbents, will never have to return to private life. But eliminating the possibility of House reelection will move political survival in that chamber—Parenti's "first intent of most officeholders"—off the incumbent's list of priorities. The effect of non-reelectability must be to raise the priority level of the motive described by Mason.

The key is to prohibit reelection of congressmen altogether, rather than adopt the multi-term version of rotation espoused by Bush and Quayle. Even allowing just one reelection would split the House roughly down the middle into freshmen and sophomores. The former would remain open to the lures and leverage of special interests who offer to fill the incumbent's campaign war chest, and vulnerable to threats that the money will go to the challenger's campaign. Under one-term rotation, however, there would be no reelection campaigns for the House, thus depriving the plutocrats of their foremost opportunity and market for buying legislation, and relieving congressmen of their prime necessity of selling.

We resist Parenti's effort to lump us together with the Bush-Quayle position, not because of anything to do with the Administration's ideological position relative to ours, but because the primary effect of their slow version of rotation would be to retire only the intra-House oligarchy. (See, for example, James L. Payne's 1991 study in *Public Interest*, no. 103, pp. 115-17). On the other hand, the rapid one-term version of rotation would eliminate the greater oligarchy as well, i.e., the whole House of Representatives, all 435 members, not just the upper echelons.

And finally, on Parenti's reference to essence over form, we invite him to reconsider. Might not each new contingent of 435 men and women—fresh from their states, uncommitted to oligarchy, uncalloused to entrenched abuses, and unburdened by

the temptations associated with reelection—be counted on to make the House of Representatives an assembly essentially different in style and substance? We think both form and essence would change fundamentally for the better, irrespective of which political party controlled the committee chairs.

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### Private Library Available

I am writing to tell you about the availability of a private library of my late husband, Dr. James Clay Thompson. He was a member of the political science faculty at UNC-Greensboro from 1976-89, a defense analyst for three administrations in Washington (Carter, Johnson, and Reagan) and the author of three books. His prevailing professional interests centered on the American military budget, NATO preparedness and cooperation, and the U.S. military's preparedness.

His library consists of 1,500 books (several are autographed), periodicals, and U.S. government documents. The books span a range of titles that include military memoirs, military history, military matters, futurist theories, American history (18th, 19th, and 20th century), scientific thought, and standard political science textbooks. The documents include an assortment of Vietnam congressional reports, congressional sub-committee reports on military matters, as well as special reports available only through his contacts within the military complex.

Any institution or individual interested in receiving a complete list of titles should contact me at: 1123 Yellowbell Place, Greensboro, NC 27410. Phone: (919) 855-8805.

Patricia Gray  
Greensboro, NC

### Political Science in the USSR

We would like to call attention to problems facing our colleagues who

are struggling to develop the discipline of political science in the Soviet Union. On separate trips this past summer we both encountered pleas for help in the effort to train or retrain scholars as political scientists. At Moscow State University there are special programs to retool former professors of Marxism-Leninism; these programs are selective and draw only the most promising students from across the country. The individual in charge of those programs noted that there is a desperate need for U.S. political scientists who would be willing to deliver lectures, especially on methodology. At Belorussian State University in Minsk, the former Department of Scientific Communism was recently retitled as the Department of Political Science, and is now under the leadership of scholars who are intent on translating their department's new name into reality and building close connections with political scientists in other countries.

While a few prominent Soviet political scientists have ready access to non-Soviet scholars and their publications, such access is not enjoyed by the vast majority of practitioners of our discipline in the USSR. In that respect, there is a wide gap between researchers in the most favored academic institutions in the Soviet Union and those in the trenches trying to create departments of political science and educate students. A survey of the card catalog of Belorussian State University—the principal institution of higher education in a republic of ten million citizens—revealed no holdings of books by Gabriel Almond, Daniel Bell, Robert Dahl, C. Wright Mills, or any other noted Western social scientists who came to mind. That is a far cry from the situation in the very few top national libraries, where most Western scholars visiting the USSR have studied.

It would greatly help political scientists at Soviet universities if members of the APSA could send them extra copies of textbooks and monographs on any and all levels. We have a remarkable opportunity to contribute to the evolution of our discipline in the territories formerly or currently associated with the USSR. And the relationship does not promise to be one-sided—we can

learn much from our Soviet colleagues. The experience should be particularly rewarding for each side in view of the lively diversity of political opinions within both societies.

We urge our colleagues who may be traveling in the near future in Russia or Belorussia to consider contacting the scholars listed below to assist in the effort to establish the discipline of political science there.

Alexander Yusupovsky  
Krylatsky 31-2-527

Moscow, 121614, USSR  
Home phone: 415-00-63  
(Professor Yusupovsky is Deputy Chair of the Department of Social and Political Theory of Moscow State University.)

Professor Alexander Baichorov  
Department of Political Science  
Belorussian State University  
Lenin Avenue 4  
Minsk, 220080, USSR  
Office phone: 26-55-48  
Home phone: 39-79-04  
(Professor Baichorov is Chair of

the Department of Political Science at Belorussian State University.)

We also urge the American Political Science Association to seek ways of offering assistance to the growth of political science in the USSR.

Carol Nechemias  
*Pennsylvania State University  
at Harrisburg*

Alfred Evans, Jr.  
*California State University, Fresno*

### **Spiro Rewards Students with Membership in APSA**

Herbert Spiro of the University of Texas at Austin awards a prize of membership in the APSA to the five best students in his introductory course on American and Texas Government. This gift introduces outstanding students, early in their college careers, to the field of political science and could nudge them toward considering a life in political science.

Another good way to suggest to excellent students that they might enjoy being in the profession is to give them a copy of "Earning a Ph.D. in Political Science." This pamphlet is available (free for single copies and small postage charge for bulk) from the national office. Give us a call for membership forms and pamphlets for your best students.