Preface

The policy sciences are in part a continuation of a tradition of policy-relevant social science research that began at the outset of the nineteenth century. It is a misconception, however, that social science research in the nineteenth century determined what became the policy sciences in the next. My own awareness of this misconception came relatively late in my journey through the policy sciences and its several tributaries, including policy studies, policy analysis, and program evaluation. Indeed, only recently did I discover that the policy sciences originated not only in the pioneering contributions of Harold Lasswell, the main founder of the policy sciences, but equally importantly in the policy-oriented approach to social science research of John Dewey and other pragmatists.

The relationship between the policy sciences and pragmatism can be investigated in many ways. In this context, one of Lasswell's main arguments, as it was of James, Peirce, and Dewey, is that social scientists are and should be committed not only to creating knowledge about social problems but also to see that such knowledge contributes to their solution.[1] In response to Robert S. Lynd's rhetorical question, *Knowledge for What?* (1939), pragmatists affirm the centrality of the social and behavioral sciences for understanding and resolving many of the most important social problems.

I proceed from the point of view that the influence of pragmatism on Lasswell and the policy sciences should be taken as an object of inquiry, as a research question, rather than as a forgone conclusion or confirmed hypothesis. Accordingly, the foregoing narrative attempts to provide plausible answers to three main questions:

- Where in Lasswell's writings do we find the influence of William James, Charles Sanders Peirce, John Dewey, and other pragmatists? Answering this question requires a logical, epistemological, and methodological analysis of what Lasswell, his closest colleagues, and students wrote about the relationship between the policy sciences and pragmatism.
- With what pragmatists – individuals as well as members of disciplinary departments and "schools" – did Lasswell interact as a student and then as a faculty member at the University of Chicago (1927–1937) and Yale University (1943–1970)? Answers to this question call for an analysis of the disciplinary matrix of students, colleagues, and academic administrators that enabled and constrained Lasswell's work and that of his main collaborator, Myres S. McDougal.

[1] To quote Lasswell's almost mantra-like maxim, the policy sciences "are concerned with knowledge *of* and *in* the decision processes of the public and civic order" (Lasswell 1971b: 1).

- What implications for the practice of policy research and analysis in universities, governments, and nongovernmental organizations issue from answers to these questions? Here, among other implications, I consider the benefits of discarding misconceived linear and cyclical models of policy making, and replacing them with the model of a complex circuit. The "circuitry" of policy making, rather than the imagery of policy cycles, is more consistent with Lasswell's views. I also suggest that we make an effort to develop a better understanding of policy change by (a) turning to functionalist and teleological theories of the decision process, by (b) moving beyond deduction and induction to the use of abductive reasoning in formulating policy problems, and by (c) exploring John Dewey's variant of pragmatism, which he called instrumentalism, to achieve a greater understanding of and capability to shape the use of scientific evidence in policy making. One benefit of instrumentalism may be the resolution of problems that stem from the associational fallacy of policy relevance: We have tended to view the process of policy analysis as relevant to the process of policy making merely because both processes involve superficially similar functions.

These questions guide this investigation of pragmatism and the origins of the policy sciences.

1 Pragmatism and the Policy Sciences

Harold D. Lasswell and several prominent collaborators, including Myres S. McDougal, Abraham Kaplan, and Daniel Lerner, were the principal creators of the policy sciences.[2] After 1950, Lasswell's new vision of policy-relevant social sciences became a major multidisciplinary movement, one he described in one of his last major works as "a contemporary adaptation of the general approach to public policy recommended by John Dewey and other pragmatists" (1971b: xiii–xiv).

The policy sciences are rooted in the philosophy of pragmatism as it evolved in the hands of William James, Charles Sanders Peirce, and other members of the "metaphysical clubs" that arose in New England in the late 1800s. The master intellectual historian of pragmatism, Louis Menand (2001: 220–221), reminds us that the term *metaphysical*, which actually designated a social group of philosophically minded, intellectually probing professors and

[2] Lasswell's most important collaborator and a virtual cocreator of the policy sciences was Myres S. McDougal. Their magnum opus is *Jurisprudence for a Free Society: Studies in Law, Science, and Policy*, 2 vols. New Haven, CT: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1992. The two volumes document the history of their collaboration on the development of the policy sciences.

lawyers, ironically frowned agnostically upon metaphysics. Peirce, the founder of the first metaphysical club, wrote that all knowledge is social. "[I]n a universe in which events are uncertain and perception is fallible, knowing cannot be a matter of an individual mind 'mirroring' reality . . . Reality doesn't stand still long enough to be accurately mirrored . . . knowledge must therefore be social" (Menand 2001: 200). This perspective, which later became an integral part of John Dewey's social interactionist theory of truth as "warranted assertibility," was a methodological pillar of the Chicago School of Pragmatism and Lasswell's policy sciences.

The policy sciences are based in part on the evolution of problem-oriented empirical research in nineteenth-century Europe, an evolution documented in historical accounts by Lerner (1959) and by Wagner, Weiss, Wittrock, and Wollman (1994/2008). However, few scholars before Lasswell and his colleagues at the University of Chicago combined multidisciplinary breadth with a pragmatic theory of knowledge that saw the social sciences as instruments of policy action.[3] Accordingly, the policy sciences mandated the creation of knowledge about the policy-making process, but required that such knowledge be used to improve that process and its outcomes.

Social Sciences and Modern States, National Experiences and Theoretical Crossroads (Wagner et al. 1994/2008) was the first systematic effort to assess four decades of progress of the policy sciences. Although this important edited volume included historical reviews by contemporary policy science scholars such as Peter DeLeon (1994) (also see DeLeon 1988, 2006), it concluded that the policy sciences were neither new nor unprecedented. After pointing to efforts by Aristotle, Plato, and Machiavelli to provide policy advice to the political leaders of the day (e.g., Aristotle's tutelage of Philip of Macedon), the authors note that in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, the term *Polizeywissenshaften* was in good currency in German-speaking countries.

In the nineteenth century, statistics and demography developed as specialized fields.[4] The Manchester and London Statistical Societies, established in the 1830s, helped shape a new orientation toward policy-relevant knowledge. The two societies hoped to replace traditional thinking about social problems with empirical analyses of the effects of urbanization and unemployment on the

[3] An early predecessor of the policy sciences was Rice and Lasswell's *Methods in the Social Sciences: A Case Book* (1931). The volume grew out of Charles Merriam's efforts, as president of the Social Science Research Council, to integrate the social sciences (Crick 1959: 169–170). Merriam was the head of the political science department at the University of Chicago and Lasswell's academic advisor.

[4] The foregoing discussion draws on chapter 2 of my *Public Policy Analysis: An Integrated Approach*, 6th edn. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018).

lives of workers and their families. In the Manchester Statistical Society, research was coupled with a commitment to social reform. A preeminent contributor to the methodology of social and economic statistics and survey research was Adolphe Quetelet (1796–1874), a Belgian mathematician and astronomer who was the major scientific advisor to the Dutch and Belgian governments. In the same period, Frederic Le Play (1806–1882) conducted detailed empirical investigations of family income and expenditures of European workers in several countries.

In England, Henry Mayhew and Charles Booth studied the life and employment conditions of the urban poor in natural (what we now call "field") settings. In writing *Life and Labour of the People in London* (1891–1903), Booth employed school inspectors as what today we know as key informants. Using what now we call participant observation, Booth lived among the urban poor, gaining firsthand experience of actual living conditions. A member of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law, he was also an important influence on the revision of policies on old-age pensions. Booth's work served as something of an exemplar for policy-oriented research in the United States, including Jane Addams's *Hull House Maps and Papers* (1895) and W. E. B. Du Bois's *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899). Addams was a colleague, friend, and confidant of John Dewey and George Herbert Mead, who followed Dewey as the most influential pragmatist and social scientist at the University of Chicago. Addams was also the founder of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the largest advocacy group in the United States committed to the protection of civil liberties.

The rise of empirical and policy-relevant research was not the result of declarations of methodological loyalty to empiricism and the scientific method. Declarations to this effect did not occur until the rise of logical positivism in the next century, when Vienna Circle philosophers engaged in the logical reconstruction of physics and proposed formal principles and rules to guide scientific practice. Instead, the rise of empirical and policy-relevant research originated in the uncertainty accompanying the shift from agrarian to industrial society. Older methods for understanding the natural and social world were no longer adequate. The key questions of the day were practical: How much did members of the urban proletariat need to earn to maintain themselves and their families? What level of earnings was required before there was a taxable surplus? How much did workers have to save to pay for medical treatment and education? How much investment in public works projects – sanitation, sewage, housing, roads – was required to maintain a productive workforce and protect the middle and upper classes from infectious diseases cultivated in urban slums? Policy-oriented empirical research provided answers to these and other questions.

1.1 The Policy Sciences Circa 1930

In the United States, the phrase "policy sciences" was used in a 1943 memorandum by Lasswell titled "Personal Policy Objectives"(Lasswell 1943; cited in Brunner 1991), followed by the edited volume *The Policy Sciences* (Lerner and Lasswell 1951). Apart from publications, however, one of the first uses of the term was in 1932 in a course titled "Policy Sciences" at Yale Law School (Van Doren and Roederer 2012). The course was offered by Thurman Arnold, a professor at Yale Law School, and Edward S. Robinson, a Yale professor of psychology.

The aim of the policy sciences, as understood at the time, was to approach government as a science – as a *policy science*. For Arnold (1937: ii), governments should be studied by scientific observation, not "in the light of faiths and symbols." When in 1937 Arnold became the assistant US attorney general in the Roosevelt administration, the course was taken over by Myres S. McDougal, who became Lasswell's lifetime collaborator. Their thirty-year collaboration is documented in the 1,588-page *Jurisprudence for a Free Society* (1992), a synthesis of their work in developing the policy sciences. At the same time, Arnold's book, *The Folklore of Capitalism* (1937), thanked Lasswell for his assistance. He was the only social scientist among a group of jurists and law professors who, in contrast to Lasswell, were largely unprepared to study political, social, and economic aspects of law.

By 1938, Arnold, McDougal, and Lasswell were colleagues. Ironically, this was the same year that Lasswell, already a well-established scholar whom Almond (1987) later described as a preeminent twentieth-century social scientist, was denied promotion to a full professorship by University of Chicago president Robert Maynard Hutchins (Bulmer 1984: 204; Dzuback 1991: 173). Lasswell subsequently resigned from Chicago, joining McDougal at Yale Law School in 1943, after serving during World War II as chief of the Experimental Division for the Study of Wartime Communications at the US Library of Congress.[5]

1.2 Legal Realism and the Policy Sciences

Legal realism is a philosophy of law that asserts that in seeking explanations of the development of legislative acts and other policies, the investigator should focus, first, on judicial, legislative, and executive decisions, not on legal principles, doctrines, or rules. "The Realists [capitalization original] successfully demonstrated that, by reference to rules alone, neither scholar nor practitioner could explain why past decisions had been made or how future decisions

[5] Harold F. Gosnell, a political scientist who conducted studies of Negro (African-American) and machine politics in Chicago, resigned for the same reason in 1942.

were likely to be made" (Reisman 1998: 35). Thurman Arnold and Myres McDougal were leading legal realists of their day, and it was legal realism and not pragmatism per se that motivated the teaching of the policy sciences in 1932–1933 at Yale. However, legal realists "were much less successful in identifying the tasks the jurist [and other policy makers] should perform and the methods to be deployed" (Falk, Higgins, Reisman, and Weston 1998: 729). Hence the need for social science methodologists such as Lasswell.

Arnold and McDougal saw legal realism as practical, but it was not *pragmatic*, in the sense of that term used by Dewey and other pragmatists at Chicago. Judging from Arnold's published disagreements on key pragmatist principles with Sidney Hook, an influential pragmatist philosopher of the time (Arnold 1937: 349–353), Arnold probably was not a pragmatist. As for Lasswell, it is clear from records of his interaction with members of the Chicago School of Pragmatism (1927–1933) that he was influenced by pragmatism when he was an undergraduate, a doctoral student, and then a faculty member at the University of Chicago.

In identifying the methods they should deploy in explaining past decisions, Lasswell and McDougal (1943, 1992) and Lasswell and Kaplan (1950) viewed the development of laws and policies as a process of making authoritative decisions about the achievement of human dignity and values of enlightenment, power, wealth, well-being, affection, respect, rectitude, and skill. To identify the operations required to achieve human dignity and associated values, they identified a sequential but broadly iterative process of decision-making with seven functions: intelligence, promotion, prescription, invocation, application, appraisal, and termination (Lasswell and Kaplan 1950; Lasswell 1956a; McDougal and Lasswell 1967). In this context, scholars and practitioners were seen to share tasks that contribute to what Lasswell and McDougal labelled *intelligence*, which was the sine qua non of performing the remaining six functions. In performing the intelligence function, decision makers:

- Identify problems in achieving goals
- Chart relevant past decisions
- Analyze factors affecting trends in achieving goals
- Forecast likely future conditions
- Identify and assess likely future decisions
- Clarify values and identify alternative solutions.

These tasks, it should be stressed, point toward future decisions, not to present or past ones. Later, in his presidential address to the 1956 meeting of the American Political Science Association, Lasswell emphasized that policy scientists

> should take the lead in integrating rather than dividing our intellectual community. Compared with an entire university, which has become a non-communicating aggregate of experts, each department can become a true center of integration where normative and descriptive frames of reference are simultaneously and continuously applied to the consideration of the policy issues confronting the body politic as a whole over the near, middle, and distant ranges of time. (Lasswell 1956b: 797)

Lasswell's 1956 recommendation is a mirror image of the institutional matrix in which the Chicago School of Pragmatism functioned after 1920.

At Yale Law School, Myres S. McDougal was an eminent scholar of international law, jurisprudence, and public policy. With Lasswell and other colleagues at Yale,[6] McDougal worked for more than thirty years on legal education for public policy, or what we now might describe as professional training in policy analysis.[7] For his part, Lasswell brought to the study of legal realism the perspectives and tools of psychology, sociology, communications, and political science, that is, elements of the multidisciplinary approach to law and public policy of which Lasswell was a master.[8]

In succeeding years, Lasswell was to become one of a handful of creative innovators in the social sciences. Gabriel Almond, one of his most successful Chicago students, has described Lasswell as "the most original and productive political scientist of his time" (Almond 1987: 249).

Lasswell's works ranged from books and articles on propaganda and social communication to political psychology and the policy sciences. Under the umbrella of the policy sciences, Lasswell invented what we know today as the two fields of policy studies and policy analysis, the former situated in the discipline of political science and the latter offered as part of curricula in microeconomics and decision analysis in professional schools of public policy.[9] The body of Lasswell's work in the policy sciences is composed of

[6] Other Yale collaborators included Arnold Reisman and Richard Falk. See Falk et al. (1998).

[7] Prior to the establishment of professional schools of public administration and public policy, professionals trained in law, rather than in applied microeconomics, policy analysis, and public administration, were the largest group of professionals prepared at Yale and other law schools for policy work at the national level.

[8] A third important influence, one that is related to Lasswell's pragmatist moorings, was his own experience as a policy practitioner during World War II. As chief of the Experimental Division for the Study of Wartime Communications at the Library of Congress, Lasswell directed policy studies that improved American wartime propaganda and opposed that of Germany and the Nazi war effort, while concurrently validating his functional model of social communication.

[9] A wider historical review of antecedents of *policy analysis* would include the rise of management science, operations research, and cost-effectiveness analysis during and immediately after World War II, particularly at the RAND Corporation. By contrast, *policy studies* grew out of political science and public administration in roughly the same period. At that time, RAND and the policy sciences were close. For example, E. S. Quade (1989), a prominent applied mathematician and policy analyst at RAND, was the first editor of the journal *Policy Sciences*.

his singly authored and coauthored contributions with Myres McDougal (Lasswell and McDougal 1992) and Abraham Kaplan (Lasswell and Kaplan 1950/2008). Lasswell and McDougal, after the first general programmatic statement of the scope and methods of the policy sciences by Lerner and Lasswell (1951), were virtual cocreators of the policy sciences, notwithstanding their early collaboration, in 1932–1933, with Thurman Arnold, to establish the initial contours of the policy sciences in their course at Yale. Later, in 1943, Lasswell joined McDougal at Yale (Falk et al. 1998), remaining there for nearly thirty years until moving to Columbia University in 1970.

1.3 The Roots of Pragmatism

Lasswell's relationship with pragmatism has roots in his interaction with pragmatists at the University of Chicago. Ascher and Hirschfelder-Ascher (2004: 7) show how Lasswell's approach to political psychology was affected by Dewey's biologically based functional psychology, years after Dewey had physically relocated to Columbia University in 1904. This same pragmatist commitment to theories of functionalism and instrumentalism underlies Lasswell's well-known maxim (1971b: 3) that the function of the policy sciences is to create knowledge *of* and *in* the policy-making process. Lasswell's policy sciences were a product of various social science "schools" at Chicago, in particular the Chicago School of Pragmatism, which fostered a cohesive network of affiliated colleagues in the social and behavioral sciences.

Regrettably, the relation between pragmatism and the policy sciences has been misunderstood. The policy sciences have been wrongly visualized as the simple application to practical problems of social science theory and methods, for example, the application of microeconomics to problems of choosing alternatives with smaller opportunity costs, as reflected in lower discount rates for future cost and benefit streams. Properly speaking, however, such applications – which environmental economist Daniel Bromley calls the conventional Paretian approach to pseudo-economic choices (Bromley 2006:13–14) – are not examples of pragmatism. The error is in assuming that social sciences such as economics and political science are policy sciences, simply because they deal with potentially applicable practical knowledge, as contrasted with traditional social science disciplines, which deal with intellectual knowledge that is valued primarily for its own sake.

Abraham Kaplan, one of the most respected pragmatists of his generation, observes that pragmatism has been widely misunderstood because concepts such as "practice" and "action" have been understood in a restrictive sense.

"There is a vulgar pragmatism in which 'action' is opposed to 'contemplation,' 'practice' to 'theory,' and 'expediency' to 'principle' . . . this vulgar doctrine is almost the direct antithesis of pragmatism, which aims precisely at dissolving all such dualities"(Kaplan 1964: 43–44). In other words, practice is the consummation of theory; theory originates in and guides action. The fusion of the contemplative-theoretical with the practical-contextual is what Lasswell and Kaplan (1950) meant by the term *pragmatic*. Kaplan informs us that:

> action that is relevant to the pragmatic analysis of meaning must be construed in the broadest possible sense, so as to comprise not only the deeds that make up the great world of affairs, but also those that constitute the scientific enterprise . . . The "usefulness" that pragmatism associates with truth is as much at home in the laboratory and study as in the shop and factory, if not more so. (Kaplan 1964: 44)

Therefore, pragmatism is not coextensive with the simple application of theories and methods to practical problems. This is evident in the differences among varieties of pragmatist thought (Rescher 1995: 710–713; Menand 2001; Shields 2004). Whereas Peirce was largely an objectivist, holding that multiple theories mirror in different ways socially constructed beliefs about nature, James was a subjectivist, which partly reflected his skepticism about what he saw as the potentially harmful effects of modern science. For James, beliefs may mirror subjective rather than objective states: beliefs may make us feel content, secure, or spiritually worthy, apart from objective external conditions. Dewey and colleagues at Chicago, however, were neither objectivists nor subjectivists; they were transactionists. Beliefs fulfill different ends that are realized and adapted through social interaction (Hickman 2009: 143–162). Rucker sums up the differences between the three men:

> Only at the University of Chicago at the turn of the century did there grow up a school of American philosophy. The pragmatism that John Dewey and his colleagues and students collaborated on there had its roots in James and Peirce, but what emerged from their efforts was distinctively their own . . . Neither James's concern to rescue sentiment from what he saw as the onslaught of science nor Peirce's drive to systematize modern thought represented the main thrust of American culture. The Chicago philosophers shared James's practical orientation, in contrast to Peirce's emphasis on theory . . . as opposed to James's fear that science, too narrowly interpreted, was a threat to human values. The Chicago pragmatists saw both science and values arising from human action, and they proceeded to derive an entire philosophy from the analysis of action. This action-derived philosophy turned out to be a pragmatism different from both Peirce's logic-centered thought and James's psychology-based work. (Rucker 1969: vi)

Dewey and the Chicago School of Pragmatism had a marked influence on philosophy, psychology, sociology, and political science. The worldview of pragmatism, as Bulmer (1984: 29–32) observes, focused on the process of change and adaptation that affects humans as well as physical objects. Activities such as policy implementation and appraisal, for example, generate actions designed to achieve the goal of human dignity and attendant values such as intelligence, power, wealth, and rectitude. "Ends were seen as relative to the circumstances in which action was undertaken" (Bulmer 1984: 29), circumstances that included the seven functionally defined decision processes elaborated by Lasswell (1956a). Values are not fixed or immutable, but contextual and transactional, arising out of the interaction of groups of persons, not individuals working alone. Base-values (means) and scope-values (ends) are in continuous flux.

1.4 Dewey's Reflex Arc

Interpreters of the policy sciences in Europe and the United States have sometimes conflated pragmatism with acts of being practical. This is perhaps understandable, at least in part, because Lasswell, one of the two principal architects of the policy sciences, wrote sparingly about the link between the policy sciences and pragmatism. Indeed, it was not until 1971 that Lasswell acknowledged that the policy sciences were a product of the ideas of John Dewey and other pragmatists. While John and Alice Dewey left the University of Chicago in 1904, which might suggest that the reign of pragmatism had ended, Dewey's influence on philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, and political scientists prevailed at Chicago well into the late 1930s. Dewey either had brought with him from his last post at the University of Michigan, or later hired, a group of pragmatists that included James R. Angell, Edward S. Ames, George H. Mead, Addison W. Moore, and James H. Tufts. These Chicago professors, and not Dewey alone, were instrumental in establishing the Chicago School of Pragmatism.

1.5 The Reflex Arc and Functionalism

One of Dewey's most widely known and influential papers, one that is acknowledged to capture the essence of his thought, is "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology," published in 1896 in *Psychological Review*. The paper, a contribution to philosophical psychology, was a critique and reformulation of principles of adaptive learning proposed by William James in *The Principles of Psychology* (James 1890). Adaptive learning, which today is often represented as one or more *feed-forward* and *feed-back* loops, was an extension of Charles Sander Peirce's "The Fixation of Belief"