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Perspectives on Implementation Research: More Responses to Lester and Goggin’s “Back to the Future”

Editor’s Note: In the September 1998 (Vol. 8, No. 3) issue of Policy Currents, James Lester and Malcolm Goggin provided a critique of the current status of implementation research, and provided their road map for revitalizing the subfield. Among the interesting arguments made was that implementation scholars can be divided into “reformers,” “skeptics,” “testers” and “terminators” depending on whether they believe implementation research should be continued and, if so, whether significant modifications are needed in extant implementation theories and approaches (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: A Typology of Implementation Scholars

		Continuation of Implementation Research	
		Positive	Negative
Modifications Needed	Yes	“Reformers”	“Skeptics”
	No	“Testers”	“Terminators”

Source: Lester and Goggin, 1998, *Policy Currents* 8(3):2.

As is true of nearly all valuable research contributions, the Lester and Goggin article has stimulated comments and rejoinders, some of them quite spirited. Using their typology of implementation scholars, four

thoughtful replies have been solicited. The January 1999 issue (Vol. 8, No. 4) of Policy Currents included responses by Peter deLeon (a “skeptic”) and Søren Winter (a “reformer”). This issue contains responses by Ann Schneider (a “terminator”) and Kenneth Meier (a “tester”).

Terminator! Who, Me? Some Thoughts About the Study of Policy Implementation

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I acknowledge being frustrated with the way implementation studies have evolved, but I am not sure I fit Lester’s and Goggin’s characterization as a terminator.¹ I think of implementation as a process, as a set of activities and behavior that should be studied. My long-time co-author Helen Ingram and I have both written on the topic, co-authored articles on it, and devoted considerable space to it our book, *Policy Design for Democracy*.² On the other hand, I do not think there is any agreement on what lens we should use to look at implementation, and those that have been used or proposed are not very helpful. Implementation is not “the” central concept in the study of public policy and it is a mistake to focus attention solely on those processes or activities that constitute “implementation.” In this sense, I suppose I am a “terminator.” I believe that the field generally lacks conceptual clarity, is atheoretical, has generated only a few important propositions, and has not been particularly valuable to policy makers or agency officials.

Professors Lester and Goggin characterized me as one of those who had “moved on” to policy design, apparently leaving behind the study of implementation. I find this characterization particularly puzzling, as it implies a chasing of fads in public policy research.

The central questions in my study of public policy have always focused on what constitutes “good” public policy, and what processes, conditions, and activities increase the odds of producing it.³ By “good” public policy I mean policy that adds positive values to the society, to the lives of people in it, and to the future conditions of democracy. “Good” public policy solves problems and contributes to justice, citizenship, and democracy. Whether we are studying policy design, policy change, political processes, or policy implementation, I believe we should keep these kinds of normative questions foremost in our minds.

In this essay I want to focus on several of the issues raised by Professor Lester, including the definition of implementation itself, the definition of “successful” implementation, strategies for conducting “useful” implementation studies and strategies for integrating the study of implementation into broader-based theories of public policy.

In searching for definitions, it is useful to begin with the way a word is used in ordinary language. To most people who work in the public sector, implementation means “putting in place” a plan, such as the plans found in statutes, guidelines from higher-level authorities, court rulings, or administrative directives to caseworkers. It means “adding to” and “filling in the details” of a blueprint. It means “carrying out” the actions that are specified or expected. Implementation involves fitting a design into a new or specific context and making the adaptations that are required to do this. The creation of new programs and organizations often is a central aspect of implementation. Implementing federal statutes, as Professors Lester and Goggins suggests, means that one or more federal agencies will prepare guidelines. In some instances state governors and legislators will need to enact legislation from among alternatives that are offered. State agencies will change their practices to comply, and perhaps write even more guidelines for local agencies to follow. Caseworkers may have to alter the ways they interact with the public.

As used in the vernacular, implementation implies a hierarchy in which authority resides within a plan (or spoken directive) that guides and constrains the actions of others. Normal usage of the term also implies a time dimension—a period of change from the normal routines of the agency. New routines, rationales, responsibilities, and organizations, are put into place. This time dimension is almost universally ignored in the academic literature. Yet in my experience working

with agency and elected officials, implementation does not go on forever. For example, no one any longer says that they are “implementing” the social security act of 1935. It is part of their standard operating procedures. They are now “implementing” the Welfare Reform Act, but in a few more years, it will be “implemented” and will have become a part of the normal routines of the agency. In terms of the oversimplified yet useful notion of policy phases, we have design, adoption, implementation, institutionalization (or standard operating procedures), assessment or evaluation, and then another round of design, adoption, implementation and so on in a continuing process of policy change.⁴

Working from these common understandings, Professor Ingram and I have offered a definition of implementation as “value added to design.”⁵ Design refers to the *content* of statutes, guidelines, programs or practices—including the tools, rules, rationales, assumptions, agents, goals, and target populations. Value (either positive or negative) is added whenever a person or organization adds detail, chooses among options, exercises discretion, or in any other way adds to or changes the design. This definition of implementation differ from some of those commonly found. Most important, it places the concept of implementation squarely within the domain of organizations or individuals who are acting as agents of the state. It can be measured through the behavior of implementers, as suggested by Winters,⁶ or through change in the policy design, or both.

Implementation needs to be studied both as a dependent variable and as an independent variable. We need to link implementation (as an independent variable or series of variables) to policy outcomes that we can characterize along evaluative dimensions. We need to link implementation (as a dependent variable) to the policy designs, political processes, and prior implementation activities.

For those of us concerned with “good” public policy, a “more successful” implementation is one that has produced more positive values for target populations or the society as a whole than some alternative implementation would have produced. Any given agency bears responsibility for its implementation choices and the policy design that it delivers to the next agency or to target populations. However, an agency is not responsible for those aspects of a policy design that it received from a higher-level authority. State departments of welfare, for example, are not responsible for the policy designs promulgated by federal or state legislators; but they are responsible for the choices they make during implementation. Success, of course, must be viewed on a continuum ranging from very successful to very unsuccessful—it is not a di-

chotomy. And, as we know from studies of policy outcomes, there may very well be more than one interpretation of the relative success of any given outcome, because policy impacts people differently. Conceptually, however, the study of implementation has to focus on the choices available to each organization or individual involved in implementation and must judge their success in *comparison with the extent of success they would have had if they had chosen other alternatives*. For those who have problems with the normative aspects of this, let me suggest that they can select outcomes that have normative implications, without passing judgment on whether such outcomes are desired or not, and can conduct studies that compare alternative implementation choices with the outcomes actually produced.

Much of the literature defines successful implementation as compliance with statutory directives (or whatever higher-level directives are being implemented), and therein lies one of my major frustrations with the field. Compliance with directives, or narrowly-conceived policy “goals” does not necessarily insure a better policy outcome. Small acts of non-compliance may produce better outcomes than rigid adherence to policy directives. Narrowly-conceived policy goals, such as producing “x” amount of “y” output within “z” time frame may or may not have anything to do with the impact of the policy in terms of solving problems or contributing to a more just society. Context has a great deal to do with how a policy will actually work in practice. In some cases, major deviations from the “incoming” design may be necessary, given contextual conditions, if desirable policy outcomes are to be achieved. These situations are common enough to seriously weaken the claim for compliance as a measure of implementation success.

There are other problems, too. If compliance is used as the standard, the focus almost immediately goes toward the easiest aspects of a policy to quantify even if these are not particularly important in whether the policy eventually will produce positive values. When compliance is the standard, the most important and creative aspects of implementation may be completely ignored. A focus on compliance directs attention away from the use of discretion, even though wise choices in discretionary decision making may have far more to do with the policy’s impact on society. Compliance, by its very nature, emphasizes the instrumental aspects of policy and minimizes or eliminates the examination of policy rationales, discourse, relationships among individuals or agencies, the perceptions that one agency has of another, or the underlying assumptions of policy. Compliance does not take into account the creative ways that agency officials may try to adapt the statute to fit into the local value context. It

would be quite accurate to portray me as a “terminator” in terms of the utility of implementation studies that focus on compliance with higher-level authority.

Ideally, we would design implementation studies that are useful to policy makers during the time period when new programs or directives are being put into place, but that also will contribute to development of public policy theory—and here I am not talking about “implementation” theory, but rather how implementation contributes to a broader theory of public policy.

I have proposed elsewhere that implementation studies could have a special niche in our policy analysis tool kit—one that differs significantly from outcome evaluations, but that is more theoretically focused and more useful than “process” evaluations.⁷ To maximize utility to persons involved in the policy process or to those who benefit or suffer from policy, implementation studies ideally should be undertaken *during the time the policy actually is being put in place*. These kinds of implementation studies provide immediate and useful information to agency officials, legislators, target populations, and other interested groups that can be used to alter the implementation strategies, solve problems, change the discretionary choices, identify possibly fatal flaws or even propose changes in the statute itself that can be expected to produce a better eventual outcome. They should document the basics of program operation: goals, resources, target population definitions, rationales, rules and provisions, incentives, and costs. They also should document the decision making processes: who makes the decision, what criteria are used, what decision options are available, who participates, what incentives are there, what principles (rationales) are applied by decision makers. The use of discretion needs to be documented—who has how much discretion, of what type, in reference to what? There needs to be careful description of the actions and discourse of relevant individuals and groups, including both agency people and target populations as well as media and interest groups. The context needs to be described in rich detail, along with the strategies officials use to adapt the policy design to fit into their own specific situation. If it is possible to *compare* the behavior of different implementers (e.g., caseworkers), or different agencies that are all implementing the same policy, then the prospect of contributions to theory and to improved policy outcomes is greatly enhanced. With these sorts of comparison, one can look for variables that contribute to more and less successful results across individuals, agencies, or in a longitudinal framework.

There is a conceptual difficulty here. I have argued that the most important dependent variables in implementation studies are the policy outcomes. Yet, the most useful implementation studies will be those

that provide information during the time of maximum change in agency processes, when there are not many policy outcomes yet observable, and certainly not any long-term results. Without policy outcomes, what standard will be used to guide the changes, and how can one avoid simply using “compliance” as the standard for success? How will the research enable agency officials to make mid-course corrections that will increase the odds of adding positive values to the society? I do not want to underestimate the paradox in this argument, and it may mean in some circumstances that implementation studies simply cannot serve both practical information needs as well as the production of knowledge that will be useful for theory or for other implementation efforts.

On the other hand, it may be possible to conduct useful and theoretically-important implementation studies by explicating the *causal theories contained in the policy design*, studying the assumptions contained in them, and engaging local participants in the implementation process to capture “local wisdom” about the immediate and expected longer-term effects of the policy, given various implementation choices. This would constitute a “Phase I” form of implementation study that should be followed by “Phase II” which involves an explicit measurement of differences in policy outcomes that are then linked back to differences in implementation choices.

The most critical elements in a “Phase I” implementation study include those aspects of the policy design that are most intricately linked as causal variables to outcomes—relying on “local wisdom” to gain insight about the context and how the design is likely to “fit” within the local context. Among the myriad of causal linkages, the focus should be on those that:

- are most likely to fail (so that if failure is observed, corrections can be made early);
- involve the greatest degree of institutional or individual change (to see if the necessary or sufficient changes are taking place and to make corrections if they are not);
- conflict the most with contextual values (to see if appropriate rationales and adjustments are being made);
- require agencies with poor relationships to work together,
- exacerbate negative or divisive social constructions, and
- expect too much of an agency or group of individuals, given the local capacity and the amount of discretion allocated by the policy (there may be too little capacity or too much discretion in some agencies).

To incorporate implementation into theories of public policy, however, we need “Phase II” studies that examine the conditions which produce different kinds of statutes and different kinds of implementation structures, including the ways that agency officials treat target populations. We also need studies that link the behavior and activity of implementers to impacts on target populations and the society as a whole.

As an example, in *Policy Design for Democracy* we suggested that the political power of target populations and their social constructions would impact statutory design, including the design of the implementation process itself. For example, we proposed that legislators would use strong statutes, but with fuzzy rationales, to deliver benefits to advantaged groups because they want to insure the group actually receives the benefits and they (the legislators) gain credit for it. Rationales typically will be fuzzy to permit maximum adaptability at the local level and avoid jeopardizing high political support for the program. When delivering benefits to deviants (such as rehabilitative programs to criminals), legislators will tend to write very specific eligibility rules but otherwise leave program design characteristics largely up to the local area, so that the agency (not the legislators) can be blamed if the program fails. We, along with others, have developed propositions about agency reactions to various kinds of statutory, or higher-level agency, directives. For example, we expect “creaming” and “re-labeling” to occur when delivering benefits to dependent populations because this legislation often provides broad definitions of eligibility (to appear to be generous), but does not provide enough resources for everyone. Hence, agencies have to limit the target population through creaming or relabeling (to make some persons not eligible).

We have also proposed that public policy as actually delivered by implementers to target populations sends important messages—both instrumental and symbolic. Implementers are working within varying levels of constraint, but nevertheless play a central role in the messages that are sent. The experiences that target populations have with public policy influence their political participation, their sense of agency, their understanding of citizenship, and their perception of what they deserve to have.

This perspective on implementation differs considerably from that suggested by Lester and Goggin, particularly in their conceptualization of successful implementation as the “timely and satisfactory performance of certain necessary tasks related to carrying out the intent of the law” (Lester and Goggin, p. 6). This definition of successful implementation is too close to “compliance” to be satisfactory to me. Second, there are *interactive* effects between characteris-

tics of the policy design, which structures the implementation process, and the context within which a policy is implemented. These *interactions* produce varying levels of successful implementation. Context includes the values, capacities, experiences, social constructions, and historical experiences of implementers within and across agencies, and of target populations. Context is every bit as complex as policy designs, and when the results are the product of the interaction between designs and context, then I do not believe it is possible to have a “parsimonious” theory of implementation. There are too many variables, and too few cases, to expect traditional causal analysis to produce traditional parsimonious theory.

It will be possible to conduct studies that predict the behavior of implementers, but to expect such predictions to work well in another context, within another policy arena, or a different time period, may be expecting too much. We need to conduct studies that will contribute to an understanding of policy outcomes within a particular context and policy arena. I think it is possible for these studies can be conducted in a timely way so that useful information and re-design can be accomplished. If Phase II studies are conducted, so that longer-term outcomes are also incorporated into the analysis, then there is the possibility of continuing re-design and improvement in policy outcomes. Perhaps there will be lessons from these kinds of implementation studies that are generalizable to other policies, other time periods, and other context—but if not, then at least the studies will have improved the capacity of this policy, and these implementers, to produce more desired policy outcomes. And that is a goal worth pursuing.

Endnotes

1. See James P Lester and Malcolm L. Goggin, 1998, “Back to the Future: the Rediscovery of Implementation Studies,” *Policy Currents*, 8(3):1-10.
2. For our previous work on implementation, see especially Schneider, Anne L. and Helen Ingram, 1997, *Policy Design for Democracy*, University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, (pages 89-93; 135-140); Ingram, Helen, 1990, “Implementation: a Review and Suggested Framework,” in *Public Administration: The State of the Field*, edited by Aaron Wildavsky and Naomi Lynn, Chatham, N.J., Chatham House; Schneider, Anne, 1982, “Studying Policy Implementation: A Conceptual Framework,” *Evaluation Review*, 6:715-730; Ingram, Helen and Anne Schneider, 1990, “Improving Implementation by Framing Smarter Statutes,” *Journal of Public Policy*, 10(1):67-88;
- Ingram, Helen and Anne L. Schneider, 1991, “The Choice of Target Populations,” *Administration and Society*, 23(3):333-56.
3. See Schneider, Anne L. and Helen Ingram, 1999 (forthcoming), “What is “Good” Public Policy? Perspectives from Policy Design and Social Constructionism,” *Current Public Policy and Management Issues*, edited by Rosalyn Y. Carter and Khi V. Thai, Boca Raton, FL, Academics Press.
4. For an example of the kinds of policy analysis that accompany each of these “phases” of the policy process, see Schneider, Anne L., 1986, “The Evolution of a Policy Orientation for Evaluation Research,” in *Public Administration Review*, 6(Nov):222-232.
5. See Schneider and Ingram, 1997.
6. Winters, Søren, 1999, “New Directions for Implementation Research,” *Policy Currents*, Vol. 8, No. 4, (January):1-5.
7. See Schneider, 1982.

Are We Sure Lasswell Did It This Way? Lester, Goggin and Implementation Research

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As a designated “tester” my first response to Lester and Goggin (1998) is to immediately gather some data, build an elaborate model, and submit the results to a journal no one else ever reads. Yet at a deeper level, I am more ambivalent about the enterprise. Quite clearly I do *not* fit the tester position of being “comfortable with the way policy implementation has been studied in the past” (Lester and Goggin 1998, 2). I think of myself as more of a stealth terminator. I use the theory when I think it will disguise my work enough to make it seem like political science to an excessively narrow discipline (Meier and McFarlane 1996); yet I often characterize the theory as “forty-seven variables that completely explain five case studies;” and I have advocated that we simply start over on the whole enterprise (Meier and Licari 1998).

So on the one hand, I am pleased that Jim and Malcolm are continuing to synthesize the work on policy implementation; this is dirty work and we need to appreciate the persons willing to do it. On the other

hand, I am fairly sure that continuing along the same path is not going to generate a significant gestalt that will return policy implementation to the center of social science. If Lasswell was alive and doing research today, I think he would counsel us to reassess our goals and strike out in new directions.

I do not have a solution to the implementation problem; if I did, I would have published it and moved on to being a gadfly in some other area of social science. Among the paths that diverge into the woods, however, many of them lead back to where we are currently standing. To sort out the paths through the Policy Implementation Woods, I will use Lester and Goggin as a foil to grind a few axes and chop out some new roads.

1. Let's Cut Down Some of the Trees

While simplistic theories of public policy are always wrong (insert your favorite theory here), parsimony is a virtue. If policy implementation is as complex as contemporary theory portrays it with numerous policy instruments affected by myriad variables interacting over several levels of government and conditioned by radically different environments (or policy types), then I despair that we will ever make much progress. Students will gravitate to other fields, and we will be gaped at as relics who somehow escaped the processes of evolution. Excessive complexity raises the question of whether or not our theories are truly falsifiable.

As an illustration, policy instruments stand out. I am skeptical that government uses more than three distinct policy instruments—incentives, coercion, and information. To slice instruments into positive and negative applications (taxes versus subsidies, information versus propaganda) or other permutations with several nuances needlessly confuses the issue (Howlett and Ramesh 1995; Hood 1986). The key question is how does the instrument try to change behavior? Honey might catch more flies; that is, a subsidy might be more enticing than a tax, but that is simply a nuance and is likely dependent on an individual's relative position on an overall demand curve.¹

So I think Jim and Malcolm are simply wrong that we need to incorporate the insights of “communications theory, regime theory, rational choice theory (especially game theory), and contingency theories.” We have too many insights and are losing sight of what we want to do. In contrast, I propose:

Proposal 1a. Any policy implementation scholar who adds a new variable or a new interaction should be required to eliminate two existing variables.

Proposal 1b. Everyone who is interested in policy implementation should pick one

variable or relationship and send an essay to *Policy Currents* advocating that it should be dropped from our theories.

Proposal 1c. We pay five formal theorists to independently produce a parsimonious theory of policy implementation. Although the odds are not good that any of the five will strike gold, they would provide us with amusing and provocative theories to test.

2. Let's Read More Broadly

To paraphrase Paul Sabatier, “all policy is implementation.”² I have always been struck by the need to put the word “implementation” in the title of an article to get students of policy implementation to read it. Any study of public policy that moves beyond the adoption phase of policymaking informs the study of policy implementation. The advocacy coalition framework (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993) says a great deal about how policies are implemented. Rather than being a separate field (see Lester and Goggin 1998, 1), policy design is an integral part of policy implementation. The design of policy is nothing more than an elaboration on the old top down model of policy implementation, and design alone often tells one a great deal about what will happen in the implementation process (Keiser and Meier 1996; Schneider and Ingram 1993).

Any study that assesses the impact of any public policy is by definition part of the policy implementation literature. As an illustration, a recent *Demography* article (Meier et al. 1996)³ examined 23 different state laws and concluded that only one, requiring Medicaid funding of abortions, had any impact on the incidence of abortion. The reason, according to the authors, was that the demand for abortion was highly inelastic and unlikely to respond to the types of costs imposed by state law. Quite clearly this study informs the field of policy implementation. Characteristics of the target population and the policy goal create situations where any policy action will have difficulty in influencing policy outcomes, a situation not uncommon in morality policy.

My biased survey of literature suggest that a wide range of journals publish articles that inform the study of policy implementation—the mainstream sociology journals, most of the public administration journals, the professions journals (public health, social work, sometimes law or medicine), many of the economics journals, and on rare occasion a political science journal. Much of this literature is not intended to directly answer questions of policy implementation, but it addresses concerns that are central to policy implementation. As an illustration Larry Lynn (1999) has just finished a 229–page tome that inventories approxi-

mately 500 studies of public management; in the process he has created a wealth of data relevant to policy implementation.

Proposal 2. No study of policy implementation should be published that does not cite literature from at least three distinct disciplines/fields.

3. Let's Get Our Hands Dirty

On one level I revel in being a tester. The problem in public policy is that too few scholars are willing to get their hands dirty and invest significant time in understanding a policy area—both its substance and its implementation. Yet we over study some areas (such as federal regulatory policies, agenda setting, and Lake Tahoe) and grossly under study other areas. Recent studies of tobacco regulation (Licari 1997), child support enforcement (Keiser and Soss 1998), gay rights (Haider-Markel and Meier 1996) are almost unique in their focus. The world needs several studies of corrections policy, public health policy (as opposed to our fascination with “paying for sickness” policies), the radical reforms underway in education policy (e.g., Project Hope rather than the ideological debates on school choice), and many other under studied areas. The recent outbreak of studies in morality policy (see Mooney 1999) has generated an impressive series of empirical studies and a somewhat controversial formal theory of drugs, sex, rock and roll (Meier 1999) that directly incorporates policy implementation.

Proposal 3. Let's rotate crops and plow some fields that we have ignored.

4. Outputs and Outcomes Should Be Our Focus

Policy implementation scholars should get a great deal of credit for bringing the study of policy outputs and outcomes into the discipline. While those who study the policy process do a service, the who gets what, when and how inevitably must address outputs and equally important outcomes. To be sure, the explanation of policy outcomes is difficult, but what we care about is better educated students, cleaner environments, healthier children, and similar outputs. Doing so requires us to use relatively complex methods to sort out endogeneity problems, and it requires creative approaches to measurement. We can learn from the agenda setting literature in its use of creative methods and measurement (we can also learn from their error of investing a great deal of time in an area without a falsifiable hypothesis).

So I think Jim and Malcolm are wrong to suggest we focus on the study of implementation behavior. Perhaps it is my warped philosophy of science, but I want to know if I manipulate X, what will happen to Y. If Y changes appropriately and

that change is predicted from theory, then exactly why someone does Y or how they feel about it, is not my concern. To paraphrase Colson's law, “if you have a firm and appropriate grip, their hearts and minds will follow.”

Proposal 4. All studies of policy implementation must have a section titled “But So What?” where a) the study is linked to a set of policy outcomes, b) the author explains why policy implementation theory is now more clear than it was before, and c) the author discusses how the study can be used to improve public policy.

5. Is There Really an “inevitable tension between theory and practice” (Lester and Goggin 1998, 1)? There are three answers to this question.

- 1.) Yes, but only if you do it wrong. Any theoretically informed policy study can be related to practice. In part this might require us to change the methods that we use; I, of course, advocate substantively weighted analytical techniques (SWAT, see www.calpoly.edu/~jgill/ for the series of papers). Other approaches might work equally well.
- 2.) Yes, but this is good. Pursuing knowledge for its own sake is a worthwhile goal. While we can speak truth to power, our first obligation is to speak truth. Not all of us are equally adept at translating knowledge into practice; specialization is good. Rather than forcing our best dancing bears to also ride bicycles, let them dance.
- 3.) No, if policy scholars are willing to learn enough about the substance of public policy. This is simply the question of whether we are political scientists who happen to study public policy (e.g., B. Dan Wood, Terry Moe) or policy scholars who happen to be political scientists (e.g., Larry Mead, Evan Ringquist). So there need not be such a tension, but some of us really think there should be.

The current theories of policy implementation, however, exacerbate this tension. If these theories are mind-numbingly complex to your average PhD, how can we expect policy makers to see the relevance of our work?

Quo Vadis?

So, grab an ax, select some portion of implementation theory, and chop away. The solution to the policy implementation theory is either some vigorous pruning by empirical scholars or a blind faith that the next Herbert Simon is currently in graduate school and will shortly publish the definitive theory of policy implementation.

Endnotes

1. Similar to Peter deLeon (1999) I am not an economist, but unlike Peter I don't think we should avoid using the tools of economics simply because that profession uses them so ineptly. As David Lowery's (1998) recent insightful essay on quasi-markets demonstrates, the tools of public choice can also be used to make intelligent assessments of public policy.
2. I don't actually know if Paul has ever said this, but it sounds like something he would say and this should be considered my obligatory citation to him.
3. I should apologize for using my own work so much as illustrations since I have never thought of myself as an implementation specialist per se, but I am too lazy to find other examples. If Hank actually paid me to write this essay and paid me enough, I am sure I could find other examples.

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Skewered

(A Column Dedicated to The Preservation Of Rotisserie Political Science)¹

by Joseph Stewart, Jr.

Finally, a submission! Peter May has been inspired by a recent exchange to devise an index for implementation researchers. Peter's original draft did not include negative points, nor was it sufficiently disparaging of Paul Sabatier, so Kristin Kenyon and I have edited the index. If you like the scheme, Peter did it. If you do not like any item(s), I did it. Any remaining errors are, of course, the fault of Paul Sabatier.

An Implementation Research(er) Index

by Peter J. May, University of Washington

James Lester and Malcolm Goggin's piece in *Policy Currents* (Vol. 8, No. 3) and subsequent commentary in that august publication chide implementation researchers for lack of methodological sophistication. This deficiency is symbolized by the fact that Lester and Goggin's discussion is itself based on a typology of different types of researchers. Clearly, what the world needs is an index of implementation researchers. Such a contribution merits at least the attention (mandatory reading) that scholars have given to the "skewered column" of *Policy Currents*.

In hopes of rectifying misimpression about the field, I offer an *index of implementation researchers* that is a quantum leap over the typology of Lester and Goggin. The index is worthy of third generation status and constitutes a bridge to the 21st century for implementation research. The conceptual foundation of the index is to think about key dimensions of implementation (see in particular the commentary by Søren Winter)—commitment, capacity, behavior, outputs, and outcomes/impacts—as they apply to researchers. At present, I have too little data—one data point (me)—to provide a valid classification of researchers by different ranges of scores. However, I am willing to certify the face validity of this index (i.e., it works for me).

Commitment to the Field of Implementation Research

- 5 pts Own original version of Pressman and Wildavsky, *Implementation* (new, not used).
- 2 pts Own a complete set of revised versions of Pressman and Wildavsky, *Implementation*, not including the first addition.
- 2 pts Own Mazmanian and Sabatier, *Implementation and Public Policy*.

- 1 pt Own Goggin et al., *Implementation Theory and Practice: Toward a Third Generation*.
- 10 pts Have taught an undergraduate or graduate course with implementation in the title.
- 3 pts Have had students who have read any of the above books.
- 15 pts Have had students who have read any of the above books that you have not read yourself.

Capacity to Undertake Research in this Field

- 5 pts Have actually read one or more of the books noted above.
- 2 pts Studied implementation under Aaron Wildavsky.
- 25 pts Studied under Paul Sabatier.
- 2 pts Know how to construct a typology.
- 5 pts Know how to construct a bookshelf to hold any of the books noted above.
- 4 pts Are too confident in your ability to draw inferences about many variables from very few cases.

Implementation Research Behaviors—Proximate Measures

- 10 pts You begin conversations with the question: "Do you consider yourself to be 'bottom up' or 'top down'?" (This may be a positive for implementation researchers, but when combined with your score on the Nerd Index, it yields a net negative.)
- 5 pts Your natural inclination is to consider all gaps in policy as stemming from problems with implementation.

Outputs

- 10 pts You have written a book in which the term implementation occurs *before* the colon for the subtitle of the book.
- 5 pts You have written a book in which the term implementation occurs *after* the colon for the subtitle of the book.
- 3 pts You have written an article in which the term implementation occurs *before* the colon for the subtitle of the article.

- 2 pts You have written an article in which the term implementation occurs *after* the colon for the subtitle of the article.
- 5 pts You have written a book or an article in which the term implementation occurs *both before and after* the colon for the subtitle of the book or article.
- 20 pts You have co-authored a book on implementation with Paul Sabatier (an exception is granted to Mazmanian for youthful indiscretion).

Outcome / Impacts

- 10 pts You have been awarded tenure on the basis of work related to implementation research (a tenuous claim).
- 3 pts Someone else has cited your research about implementation (not including relatives or friends).
- 50 pts Paul Sabatier has cited your research more times than his own research (purely hypothetical).
- 2 pts You have advanced in your research impact to writing commentary about weaknesses in the field.
- 5 pts You actually produced practical advice, which was followed, about how to implement a program or policy (need not consider outcome of that advice).
- 10 pts The opposite of what you advised was done, which led to a favorable outcome.
- Sacrifice all earned points in this category: you get appointed to a position in which you have to implement your own advice.

¹See Meier, Kenneth J. and Joseph Stewart, Jr. 1992. "Rotisserie Political Science." *PS* 25(3).

Send comments or submissions to:

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SWF political scientist with great data set seeks SW/B/HM with testable theory for good times and possibly long-term coauthorship. Smokers and formal theorists need not apply. Reply in confidence to Box 4167 this paper.

Are people exploiting your common pool resources? Do you fear government will make matters worse? The Workshop in Political Economy offers a variety of voluntary solutions. Send for our free brochure that outlines our service options. Reply to Box 9846 this paper.

MM top down implementation theorist sees S/MF bottom up theorist for an integrative approach. I like long romantic walks, country music, and intergovernmental programs, if you have similar interests, let's meet for a panel and talk about our future. Reply to Box 8803 this paper.

Principal seeks agent for monitoring, oversight, and discipline. Must have information advantage and incompatible goals. I have budget control, oversight and other restrictive devices. Reply to Master Rick, Box 4929 this paper.

Policy Scholar, theory of the state, seeks others with same religious values to explore extended case study. Must have faith in a higher power than interest groups. Reply to Box 0001 this paper.

Policy Currents is continuing to accept personal ads for our Personals column (until our attorneys say otherwise). If you would like more information on the column or would like to submit a personal ad, please contact:

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