

## I. Goals of Public Policy

*Deborah Stone's four goals of public policy*

**Equity or Equality**

**Efficiency**

**Security**

**Liberty**

*Equity*

**There are different kinds of equality**

**These are based on**

The recipients of a public good

The item that is being distributed

And the process by which the thing is distributed

**Stone lists at least eight different ways one can use equity language to distribute a good, often in ways that you would consider to be unequal.**

*Efficiency*

**What is efficiency?**

"Getting the most output for a given input"

"Achieving an objective for the lowest cost"

**Efficiency is not an end goal; it is a means to an end**

**It is very difficult to measure efficiency in the public sector or in politics in general. Why?**

**What are the inputs?**

Labor

Materials

Expertise

Other intangibles?

### **What are the outputs?**

Products

Services

Values?

### **The market is often held up as the paragon of efficiency**

Thus, there are many calls for privatizing government

We often hear calls to run government like a business.

Knowing what you know about the market and polis, why are these demands unrealistic?

### **What characterizes a market?**

Voluntary exchanges of things of value

Based on two kinds of information

*Objective information about the price and quality of an item*

*Subjective information about preferences*

*Does this information really exist?*

### **Market failure**

Governments have to step in when markets fail; i.e., when these assumptions lead to allocative inefficiency or gross inequity.

Examples

*Correction of monopoly*

*Correction of problems of information*

*Problems of impacts on people who are not making the exchange.*

*Failure to provide collective goods (national defense, police)*

Thus, government is often involved in

*Alleviating the inefficiencies of the market*

*Providing goods inefficiently because there is no market way to do so*

*Imposing requirements for equity on the market, thereby introducing inefficiency.*

*The paradox: there's always an "equal" and "unequal" dimension.*

### **Can Government ever really look like a market?**

Government often regulates the market, by regulating who or what can buy or sell what products

Government often compels involuntary exchanges: drafts labor for the army, taxes us for things we may not individually want, etc.

Can the "efficiency" of public goods production be effectively measured?

**To conclude, then, government cannot run like a business because**

It is not a business: it is composed of citizens and voters, not buyers, sellers and producers

It engages in those activities that are not profitable by definition

It is difficult to measure inputs and outputs in government.

One person's efficiency may be the next person's gross inequity.

### *Ideas on liberty*

**People are free to unless their actions cause some sort of harm to others**

**This idea derives from J.S. Mill's "On Liberty"**

**This freedom is negative freedom, meaning that government should just let people do what they want and leave them alone**

**But what does harm mean?**

No one is free to physically harm another person

But what about other types of harms?

*Accidents*

*Pollution*

*Mistakes*

### **Nonphysical harms**

Material affects: impact on wealth or well-being

Amenity affects: impact on quality of life, such as billboards, destruction of wildlife

Emotional and psychological effects

Spiritual and moral harms

**Liberty can therefore be limited by our common obligations to the Polis.**

Thus, there are harms that are not done to individuals, but are done to the community

*Structural harms: damage to the ability of the community to function as a community*

*Accumulative harms: harms if everybody starts doing it, like cutting across lawns, sewage dumping, jaywalking*

*Harms to a group that result from harms to individuals: racial discrimination, for example.*

**Tradeoffs between liberty (the ability to do what we want) and security (the ability to be free from a harm imposed by others)**

The problem of dependence

*If we provide economic security to the poor and the unemployed, do we grant them security at the cost of their liberty (i.e., their freedom of action)?*

*If we value liberty, we place security in the hands of the family or household, thereby eliminating government intrusion*

Tradeoffs between liberty and security

*If we value security, we grant greater powers to government (and society) to make us secure*

*We risk dependency and less freedom*

*Government becomes more intrusive*

*Dependency is not good even for the poor, who are trapped in a legal/bureaucratic tangle.*

**The Liberty/Equality Tradeoff**

People have different talents, skills etc., thus, govt should equalize these resources.

This is positive liberty, not negative liberty, and makes many American uncomfortable.

Negative liberty—freedom to

Positive liberty—freedom from

## II. Problems

*We'll start with the more traditional approach to this, then we will move to discussing how Stone thinks about problem definition.*

### **Problem Defined:**

"A question or situation that presents uncertainty, perplexity, or difficulty,

"[a] source of trouble or annoyance"

### **What are some big problems in the United States that you would like to see addressed?**

Why is your example a problem?

How do you or we learn about a problem?

### **Conditions versus problems**

Conditions: things in the world that may be bad, but that we cannot do much about.

*Problems: things that are bad in the world that something can be done about.*

*What are some examples of things that were once problems but that are now conditions?*

### **What causes problems to emerge?**

Indicators

Focusing events

The pressure of social movements or political action-  
of which social construction is a part

### **How do conditions become problems that we can address?**

Changes in the nature of the condition itself

*Increased scientific knowledge*

*Increased technical capability*

*Changes in the social construction of the problem*

***Problems***

**This section of Stone's book is about how we come to understand problems and promote solutions to them. This relates very closely to the material we've already covered on problem identification and, to a large extent, agenda setting**

**How do people address problems?**

With symbols

With numbers

By attributing causes

By claiming interests

By relying on decisions

**Symbols**

A symbol is "anything that stands for something else."

Some examples of symbols?

**Four Aspects of Symbolic Representation**

Narrative Stories

Synecdoche (figures of speech "in which a part is used to represent the whole.")

Metaphors

Ambiguity—a crucial feature of symbols in politics

**Story lines**

Overview

*Narrative stories (anecdotes)*

**Stories of decline or of progress halted**

### **Stories of helplessness and control**

“What had formerly appeared to be ‘accidental,’ ‘random,’ ... or ‘natural’ is now alleged to be amenable to change through human agency.”

Conspiracy stories

Blame the victim stories

### **Stymied progress stories**

### **Stories about how bad things happen**

*Causal stories*

*Synecdoche*

*Change is only an illusion*

Stories of helplessness and control

The “Horror Story”

***“Politicians or interest groups deliberately choose one egregious or outlandish incident...” to justify change.***

***Examples:***

**Welfare queens**

**Excessive regulation**

**Huge jury settlements (Examples: OSHA and the tooth fairy, the McDonald’s scalding case.)**

### **Types of metaphors**

Machines and mechanical devices

Wedges and Inclines

***“Thin edge of the wedge”***

***“Slippery slopes” ladders***

Containers

*“Spill overs”*

Contagious disease

*Symbolize deterioration and decline*

*The poor as having some sort of “pathology.”*

War

*The War on Poverty*

*The War on Drugs*

*But...Carter’s “moral equivalent of war” speech  
backfired.*

## **Numbers**

The decision to count something is a highly political act

*Sometimes we choose not to count things because of  
the political implications of the data*

Sometimes numbers are only partial measures

*How do we measure an elephant?*

Numbers are metaphors

## **Numbers as metaphors**

Counting means selecting one feature over a set of other features.

Counting requires judgment, and can lead to challenges on the basis of

*Inclusion and exclusion*

**Example: the Unemployment Rate**

*a real difference between things being counted*

**Example: Hospital beds**

## **Causes and Causal Stories**

Causal stories about what causes problems

The table on page 191 gives two dimensions to causal stories

*Actions that are either purposeful or unguided*

*Consequences that are either intended or unintended*

Does it matter if one argues that something was unguided with unintended consequences (an accident) versus, say, something purposeful and intended (a conspiracy) or purposeful and unintended (inadvertent causes)?

### **Causal Strategies in Program Definition (page 204)**

Show that the problem is caused by an accident of nature

Show that the a problem formerly interpreted as accident is the result of human agency

Show that the effects of an action were secretly intended by the actor

Show that the low probability effects of an action were accepted as a calculated risk by the actor

Show that the cause of the problem is so complex that only large-scale policy changes at the social level can alter the cause.

**Causal stories are, in the end, socially constructed**