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IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL POLICY REVISITED

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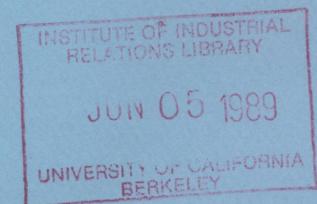
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## Abstract

In this paper we assess the state of theory development in the study of social policy implementation and offer a new theoretical model. The paper reviews and classifies the major theoretical and empirical studies of implementation along five dimensions: Unit of analysis, policy stimuli, causes or driving forces, and explanatory model. On the basis of such classification, a new theoretical model - techno-political - is proposed which consists of three core components: Policy stimuli, driving forces, and implementation structure. These are linked to policymaking and policy outcomes through feedback loops. The driving forces which are at the heart of the theory are technological requirements and power relations. Thus, the theory is firmly anchored in two interrelated organizational theories - contingency and resource dependency.

## Implementation of Social Policy Revisited

Despite the accumulation of a significant body of theoretical and empirical studies on implementation of social policies (for a review, see for example, Nakamura and Smallwood 1980, Alexander, 1985), the field still suffers from lack of convergence and theoretical coherence. While the importance of implementation as an intervening factor between social policy and its outcomes is no longer in doubt, there is no agreement on either its conceptual boundaries or on an appropriate theoretical framework. Conceptually there has been confusion as to where one draws the line between policymaking, implementation and evaluation, or whether such a line can be drawn at all. Van Horn and Van Meter (1977: 103), for example, state that implementation "encompasses those actions by public and private individuals (or groups) that affect the achievement of objectives set forth in prior policy decisions." Similarly, Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983: 20) define implementation as "the carrying out of a basic policy decision..." In contrast, Majone and Wildavsky (1978: 114) make a compelling case for viewing implementation as an evolutionary process: "As we learn from experience what is feasible or preferable, we correct errors. To the degree that these corrections make a difference at all, they change our policy ideas as well as the policy outcomes, because the idea is embodied in the action." Barrett and Fudge (1981: 25) likewise suggest that "it is appropriate to consider implementation as a policy/action continuum in which an interactive and negotiative process is taking place over time..." Alexander (1985) carries this idea to an extreme by proposing a model in which stimulus-policy-program-implementation are interlinked in a fully interactive model.

There has also been considerable divergence regarding the appropriate

theoretical framework for studying implementation. Elmore (1979), for example, points to several different organizational theories ranging from systems theory to organizational development as applicable to the study of implementation. Indeed, some researchers analyze implementation from a rational ends-means perspective (e.g. Sabatier and Mazmanian 1980), while others examine how the pursuit of self-interests creates an irrational process (Bardach 1980). Some adopt a model of bureaucratic discretion and adaptation to explain implementation (e.g. Weatherley and Lipsky 1977, Radin 1977). Still several studies avoid the issue altogether by taking an eclectic approach (e.g. Chase 1979; Nakamura and Smallwood 1980, Bullock and Lamb 1984).

Adding to the theoretical difficulties, implementation studies -- with few exceptions -- are generally preoccupied with explaining the failure of social policies. Only a handful of studies focus on determinants of successful implementation (e.g. Bullock and Lamb 1984; Levin and Ferman 1985, Goggin 1987). The underlying assumption seems to be that the inevitable gap between the official intent of the policy and its actual outcomes constitutes failure; consequently, the aim of the studies is to expose the "villains." In some cases, the villains turn out to be the ambiguity and uncertainty of the policy itself and the resultant administrative discretion of the implementors (e.g. Larson 1980; Sabatier and Mazmanian 1980; Brodtkin 1986). In other instances, the villains are either the stakeholders driven by self-interests (e.g. Bardach 1980), or simply the impasse created by an excessive number of players within the decision-making process (Pressman and Wildavsky 1979). This is analogous to the intellectual deadlock encountered in studies of goal attainment or effectiveness in organizations. In both instances, the normative and pluralistic meaning of the terms render them useless as scientific concepts (Perrow 1961; Hannan and Freeman 1977).

We propose that an important step toward theoretical convergence is to develop a taxonomy that can identify a common set of dimensions by which various approaches to the study of implementation can be classified. Such a classification can point to the conceptual boundaries of implementation and then provide us with the building blocks for a more comprehensive theoretical framework that ties together several different theoretical and empirical strands. Moreover, we suggest that the focus of implementation studies must shift away from explaining "success" or "failure" and toward understanding the factors that shape the actual service delivery system that is stimulated by the policy. In this paper we offer such a classification and then present a new theoretical framework that is informed by it. In such a framework, the dependent variable is not the success or failure of implementation but rather the resultant service delivery system. We limit our inquiry to policies which address social problems.

#### Toward a Taxonomy of Implementation Studies

The purpose of a classifying implementation studies is to identify in a systematic way their basic differences and similarities, and to ascertain whether certain patterns emerge which can inform subsequent theory building. Our aim is not to present a comprehensive classification or an exhaustive review of all the studies. Parsimony in this instance is essential for theory development. Thus, we focus on a few key building blocks required for an explanatory model -- the unit of analysis, the stimuli or exogenous variables, the causes, and the mode of explanation -- and apply these to a sample of frequently cited studies.

#### The Unit of Analysis

We identify four distinct units of analysis used in implementation

studies: 1) the policy itself, particularly its consistency and explicitness, the soundness of its underlying causal theory, and the clarity of its prescriptions (Van Horn and Van Meter 1977; Sabatier and Mazmanian 1980, Edward 1980); 2) the interorganizational network, which includes both vertical relations between federal, state, and local agencies (Pressman and Wildavsky 1979) and horizontal relations among various organizations participating in implementation at the local level (Goggin 1987); 3) the intra-organizational structure and processes of the implementing agency (Montjoy and O'Toole 1979); and 4) the individual actors themselves, especially their interests, beliefs and motivations (Bardach 1980; Weatherley and Lipsky 1977; Quinn 1986).

#### The Policy Stimulus

While all studies accept policy as the dominant stimulus for the implementation process, there are differences in emphasis on specific policy stimuli. Three are recognized: 1) the technical specifications and requirements of the policy (Chase 1979); 2) the resources to be allocated by the policy (Bardach 1980); and 3) the designated stakeholders, including those charged with the authority and responsibility to implement the policy (Edwards 1980), those expected to assist and collaborate in the implementation (Nakamura and Smallwood), and the potential beneficiaries.

#### Theory of Causality

By theory of causality, we refer to the theoretical bases for explanations offered about the observed patterns and consequences of implementation. It identifies the driving force(s) which determines the specific trajectory of the implementation process. We have identified five such theories or driving forces. The first is the pursuit of rationality which argues that implementation is driven by a chain of goal-means relations. Thus the outcome of the implementation process is a function of the number and

types of barriers encountered in the pursuit of a rational planning and execution process. Rein and Rabinovitz (1978) term this "the rational-bureaucratic imperative" which takes into consideration the workability of a policy and its consistency of principles. Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980: 187) refer to this as the ability of the statute to structure the implementation process: "To the extent that the statute stipulates a set of clear and consistent objectives, incorporates a sound theory relating behavioral change to those objectives, and then structures the implementation process in a fashion conducive to obtaining such behavioral change, the possibilities for attaining statutory objectives are enhanced..."

The second causal theory is the organization-environment fit, which stipulates that implementation is a function of the ability of the organization to develop structures and processes that fit the technical and environmental contingencies emanating from the policy (Goggin 1987). Derived from a contingency model of organizations (Lawrence and Lorsch 1967), this theory argues that the implementation of the policy sets several task and environmental contingencies, particularly in terms of complexity, uncertainty, clarity of information, and time span. To respond effectively, the organization must develop an internal division of labor and patterns of work that reflect these contingencies. Radin (1977), for example, attributes many of the difficulties of implementing school desegregation policy to the lack of fit between the organizational structure of the federal bureaucracy and the technical and environmental contingencies of the policy. As she puts it (1977: 187), "the complex system of federal, state, and local relationships in American education was virtually ignored as the Title VI policies were operationally defined on their own terms, standardized, and limited to regional application."

The third causal theory refers to bureaucratic discretion and adaptation (Edwards 1980; Brodtkin 1986). It proposes that the course of implementation is controlled by the degree and exercise of discretion by bureaucrats who are at the front-line of service delivery. Frequently these bureaucrats will use their discretion to maintain existing organizational routines (Weatherley and Lipsky 1977), thus subverting the intent of the new policy. In a similar vein, Kaufman (1971: 39-40) observes that bureaucracies are inherently conservative and unreceptive to innovation: "The generally recognized collective benefits of stability and the opposition to change based on calculations of prevailing advantage, protection of quality, and the costs of modification furnish a thought-out foundation for resisting all efforts to reshape organizations or alter their behavior." Likewise, Edwards (1980) argues that standard operating procedures and internal bureaucratic fragmentation are significant impediments to implementation. On a more positive note, McLaughlin (1976) observes that front-line staff may adapt to an innovation if they can play a role in developing the new technology and if they feel personally rewarded and recognized for implementing the change.

The fourth theory evolves around power relations among contending interest groups (Bardach 1980). Implementation is viewed as an arena in which interest groups compete, bargain, and coalesce in order to obtain or control resources. These power relations, in turn, determine the fate of the implementation process. As noted by Levin and Ferman (1985: 35), "the core of politics is the conflict of interests. Individuals and organizations, therefore, resist the implementation of a policy or program because they do not see it as being in their interests." Ingram (1977), noting the divergence of values and objectives among stakeholders, proposes a bargaining model as a framework for understanding implementation.

Finally, there is a causal theory of leadership and competence which argues that implementation is a function of the leadership qualities, interpersonal skills and competence of the implementors (Nakamura and Smallwood 1980). Bardach (1980), for example, cites the active role played by a state legislator in improving the implementation of a mental health reform bill: first, by repairing flaws in the legislation with "cleanup" bills; and second, by personally intervening in the political games played at the local level in order to steer implementation along a desirable course. Similarly, Levin and Ferman (1985) stress the leadership roles of the executive as a "fixer" in repairing and adjusting the implementation process and as a "double agent" in securing joint action among various interests.

#### Mode of Explanation

Most of the studies adopt one of two modes of explanations, labelled by Mohr (1982) as "variance" and "process." In variance theory the precursor (X) is a necessary and sufficient condition for the outcome (Y). Variance theory deals with variables; it deals with efficient causes; and it is unconcerned with time ordering among the independent variables because this is seen as immaterial to the outcome. In contrast, in process theory the precursor is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the outcome. Process theory deals with discrete states and events; it deals with final causes (i.e. end results); and it views time ordering of independent variables as critical to the outcome. Mohr goes on to indicate that many researchers tend to mix and confuse both modes of explanation, a problem common to implementation research.

There are few instances where variance theory has been used as the mode of explanation. Examples include Goggin's study (1987) of implementation of child health programs in five states, and Levin and Ferman's study (1985) of

nine successful youth employment programs. Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983) also present their theory in a variance mode of explanation and analyze several case studies from this perspective. In contrast, process theory is quite prevalent in studies of implementation, exemplified by the work of Pressman and Wildavsky (1979) and Weatherley and Lipsky (1977).

Finally, scholars may avoid specifying a particular mode of explanation, but rather resort to a list of causes which individually and collectively have some positive or deleterious effects on implementation. Although they take the form of X causing Y, there is no specification of whether the cause is efficient or merely necessary (e.g. Nakamura and Smallwood 1980; Chase 1979). We refer to such a mode of explanation as being ad hoc.

We need to emphasize that, with the exception of the mode of explanation, the categories in each dimension or building block are not mutually exclusive. In other words, it is quite plausible -- and a frequent occurrence -- that researchers will address several units of analysis, stress one or more policy stimuli, and combine different causal theories in their theoretical or empirical studies. However, as we will show below, there are several dominant combinations of categories from the different dimensions. For example, researchers who focus on the stakeholders are more likely to evoke power relations as their causal theory. Similarly, researchers who focus on the policy as the unit of analysis are more likely to highlight its technical aspects and to adopt pursuit of rationality as a causal theory.

Figures 1a and 1b present respectively the classification of a group of theoretical and empirical studies according to the above dimensions. The studies were selected to broadly represent the field, and the selection was weighted toward those studies which have been frequently cited in the literature. Several interesting patterns emerge. First, the theoretical

studies give equal attention to all three policy stimuli and are more likely to adopt the pursuit of rationality, followed by bureaucratic discretion and adaptation as causal theories. In contrast, the empirical studies almost universally focus on the stakeholders as the stimulus and on power relations as the causal theory. Closely observing the actual implementation process seems to sensitize the researchers to differences in interests and values, to power struggles, and to negotiations and bargaining among the various participants, perhaps masking the notion that the implementors might also be guided by a norm of rationality.

Second, although stakeholders dominate as a stimulus, the literature also suggests that the technical specifications of the policy and the resources it provides are important. Third, considerable attention is given to the interorganizational network and the intra-organizational structure and processes as the major units of analysis. Thus, the general emphasis in implementation studies is on structural issues. Much less consideration is given to the role of actors or to the social-psychological processes of leadership and competence. Finally, clearly the dominant mode of explanation is process rather than variance theory, though several of the empirical studies employ an ad hoc mode.

[Fig. 1 about here]

What can we learn from this taxonomy that could bring us closer toward a theoretical convergence? Once we move away from a simplistic and normative definition of "success" and "failure" as the dependent variable, we can avoid the assumption that there is a clear demarcation between policymaking, implementation and evaluation, and that there is a consensus on the desired outcomes. Instead, we argue that the focus of implementation research should

FIGURE 1a: A TAXONOMY OF THEORETICAL STUDIES

THEORETICAL STUDIES	UNIT OF ANALYSIS			POLICY STIMULUS			CAUSES				EXPLANATORY MODEL		
	Policy	Inter-organizational	Intra-organizational	Actors	Stakeholders	Rationality	Org./ Environ. Fit	Bureaucratic	Power Relations	Leadership Skills	Process	Variant	Ad Hoc
Alexander (1980)	XX				X	XX		X	X		XX		
Berman (1978)		XX	XX		XX			XX	XX		XX		
Edwards (1980)	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX		XX	XX			XX	
Fudge and Barrett (1981)	X	XX		X	XX				XX		XX		
Montjoy and O'Toole (1979)			XX		XX			XX			XX		
Makamura and Smallwood (1980)		XX	X	X	XX			XX				XX	
Rein and Rabinovitz (1978)		X	XX		XX			X	XX		XX		
Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980)	XX				XX				XX			XX	
Van Horn and Van Meter (1977)	XX	X			XX			XX	X		XX		

KEY: XX = Primary emphasis  
 X = Secondary emphasis

FIGURE 1b: A TAXONOMY OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES

EMPIRICAL STUDIES	POLICY/PROGRAM STUDIED	UNIT OF ANALYSIS		POLICY STIMULUS			THEORY OF CAUSALITY			EXPLANATORY MODEL						
		Policy	Inter-organizational	Intra-organizational	Actors	Technical Resources	Stakeholders	Rationality	Org./ Environ. Fit	Bureaucratic	Power Relations	Leadership Skills	Process	Variant	Ad Hoc	
Bardach (1980)	Mental Health Policy in California	x			XX	XX	XX					XX (1)		XX (2)		
Brodin (1986)	APDC Quality Control in Massachusetts			XX				XX				XX				
Bullock and Lamb (1984)	U.S. Civil Rights Policy	XX	XX	XX	x			XX	XX	XX	XX	XX			XX	
Chase (1979)	Public Health Programs in New York City			XX				XX								XX
Berthick (1972)	U.S. Model Cities Program	XX	XX	x				XX				XX	XX			XX
Goggin (1987) (3)	Child Health Program in California	XX	XX					XX				XX	XX			XX
Goggin (1987) (3)	Child Health Program in Five States	XX	XX	XX				XX				XX	x			XX
Larson (1980)	U.S. Health, Educ., Environ., Energy Progs.	XX	XX					XX	XX (4)	x	XX	XX				XX

(Continued Next Page)

FIGURE 1b (Continued)

EMPIRICAL STUDIES	POLICY/PROGRAM STUDIED	UNIT OF ANALYSIS		POLICY STIMULUS		THEORY OF CAUSALITY			EXPLANATORY MODEL							
		Policy	Inter-organizational	Intra-organizational	Actors	Technical Resources	Stakeholders	Rationality	Org./ Environ. fit	Bureaucratic	Power Relations	Leader-ship Skills	Process	Variant	Ad Hoc	
Levin and Forman (1985)	U.S. Youth Employment Programs	x			XX		XX	x		XX	XX			XX		
McLaughlin (1976)	Innovations in Classroom Organization				XX				XX						XX	
Pressman and Wildavsky (1979)	U.S. Economic Development Prog. in Oakland	x	XX				XX								XX	
Goulin (1986)	Housing Code Enforcement in St. Louis				XX					XX	x					XX
Radin (1977)	U.S. School Desegregation Policy	XX	XX	XX		XX			XX	XX	x					XX
Weatherley and Lipsky (1977)	Special Education Reform in Massachusetts	x			XX											XX

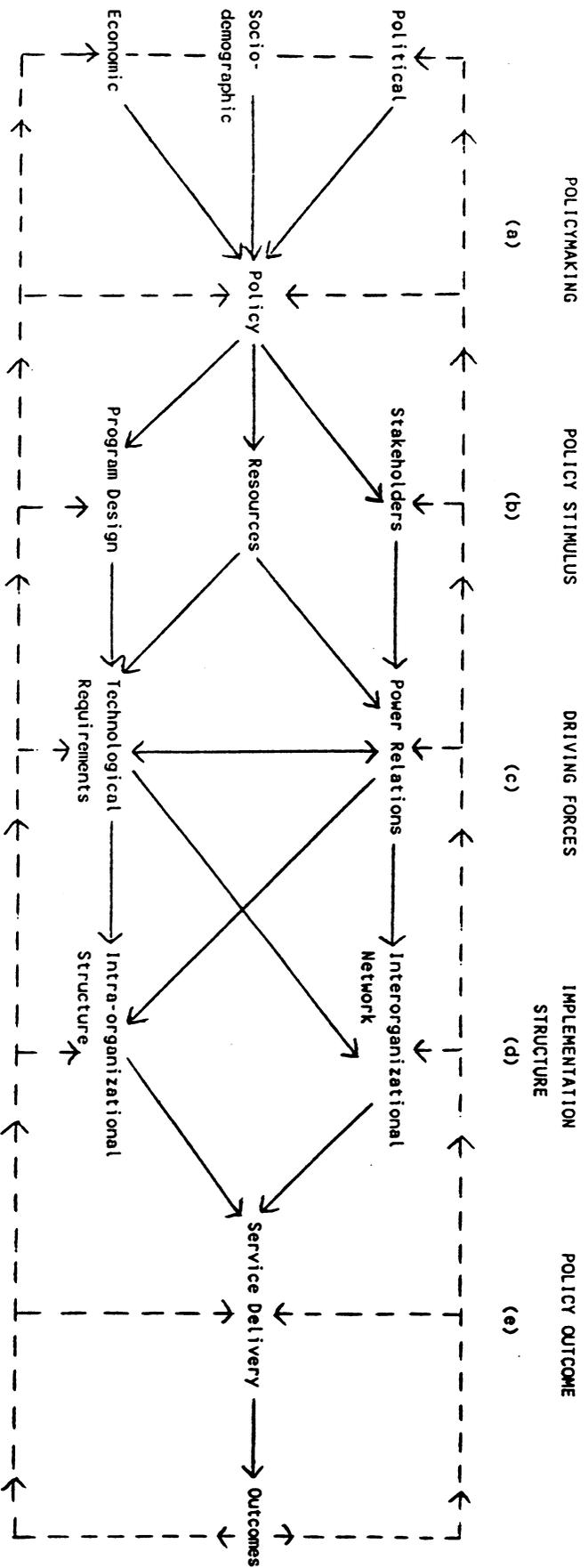
KEY: XX = Primary emphasis  
 x = Secondary emphasis

- (1). As applied to Bardach's general description of implementation games.
- (2). As applied to Bardach's analysis of a mental health act in California.
- (3). Goggin's book is divided into two distinct program analyses. The separate classifications on the table reflect this division.
- (4). In Larson's case, "Resources" refers to general economic conditions rather than funding, personnel, facilities, or incentives.

shift toward explaining the emergence of the actual service delivery system. To do so, it is necessary to study the implementation process itself: its trajectories, and the forces that shape these trajectories. A theory of implementation therefore must be a process theory, since its focus must be on discrete states and events and how they combine and interact over time to produce the end results.

We need to identify the various elements that interact with each other as a result of the policy stimuli, and the processes through which these elements are likely to combine to produce the end result -- i.e., the service delivery system. We further need to acknowledge that the process is evolutionary, iterative and time-bounded. Thus the core of the theory must include the policy stimuli, the forces that drive the actual implementation, the organizational conditions in which these forces operate, the resultant inter- and intra-organizational structures, and the actual service delivery system. This core is linked on the one end to policymaking and at the other end to outcomes. These linkages represent feedback loops through which the implementation shapes policymaking and through which outcomes influence implementation (Alexander 1985). The elements in such a theory of implementation must be structural: namely, the patterns of relations among the groups and organizations that have a stake in the policy (i.e., the interorganizational network); and the patterns of relations among the work units that constitute the intra-organizational structure of the implementing agency. As noted earlier, one of the challenges for theory-building is to identify the driving forces through which these elements are arranged and rearranged into structures which generate the service delivery system. The taxonomy already points to the importance of the technological requirements and the power relations among the stakeholders as such forces.

FIGURE 2: A TECHNO-POLITICAL MODEL OF IMPLEMENTATION



KEY: — = Feedback loop

## A Techno-Political Theory of Implementation

We present a theory of implementation which consists of five components: a) policymaking; b) policy stimuli; c) the driving forces; d) the inter- and intra-organizational arrangements; and e) the service delivery system and its outcomes. As indicated earlier, the three middle components constitute the core of the implementation process and are the focus of the theory-building that follows (see Fig. 2).

[Fig. 2 about here]

We begin by specifying the two driving forces -- technological and political -- which are the essence of the theory. We then indicate how these forces are set in motion by the policy stimuli and how they affect the interorganizational relations and the internal organizational structure of the implementing agency. These inter- and intra-organizational structures and processes shape the nature of the service delivery system. While we do not explicitly discuss policymaking and outcomes, we propose that they are linked to the three core components through feedback loops. In other words, as the policy stimuli, driving forces, and implementation structure develop and evolve over time, the original policy may be modified to reflect these changes, and program outcomes may also be affected. Our point is that the implementation process is dynamic and evolutionary.

### The Driving Forces

Implementation is driven by two imperatives: one technological, the other political. Implementation becomes a non-issue when the technological requirements of the policy are unambiguous (i.e., the knowledge of cause-effect relations is complete) and when the power to implement is fully

concentrated. It is because these conditions rarely if ever exist that implementation becomes complex and worthy of study.

As Pressman and Wildavsky (1979: xv) observe, every social policy "points to a chain of causation between initial conditions and future consequences." Thus, the implementation of every policy involves the technical operationalization of a theory of causation assumed or explicated by the policy. For example, recent welfare and work policies such as GAIN in California specify several service technologies assumed necessary to move welfare recipients to work, including appraisal of employability, remedial education, job clubs and job search, vocational training and community work experience. Yet individually and combined, these technologies include many elements of uncertainty regarding outcomes, let alone operationalization (Gueron, 1987).

Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980) make the technological requirements a cornerstone of their theory. They identify such variables as the availability of a valid technical theory and technology, the incorporation of an adequate causal theory and the existence of unambiguous policy directives. Stated differently, each policy presents the implementors with various technological complications. The greater the degrees of complexity and uncertainty, the more difficult and resource-consuming will be the implementation process, and the greater will be the personal discretion of the implementors. It is not surprising that in the face of technological uncertainty, policymakers and implementors may alter program requirements to reduce complexity and increase routinization. For example, in a study of housing code enforcement in St. Louis, Quinn (1986) found that the city workers adopted a practice of "urban triage" in which they enforced building codes in "middle" neighborhoods that they considered neither too good nor too deteriorated to salvage. When the

federal government provided the city with special funding to focus on blighted areas, the enforcement efforts became ensnarled in red tape and undermined by weak administration, causing the federal auditors to conclude that the targeted neighborhoods were too run down for code enforcement to work. City workers thus reverted to their old triage approach.

The political imperative refers to the need to coalesce sufficient power in order to control the activities of the various stakeholders and attain their compliance. Because implementation is dependent on the participation of various stakeholders, conflict of values and interests is inevitable ( Fudge and Barrett 1981). Moreover, because each of the stakeholders controls resources that are necessary for the implementation of the policy, numerous exchanges must take place. When power is concentrated, the implementors have greater control over the terms of the exchanges, and can bring about greater compliance even in the face of conflict. When power is dispersed, the number of decision makers increases and the probability of agreement declines (Pressman and Wildavsky 1979); the exchange of resources become less stable and predictable; and the potential conflict of values and interests increases.

It is important to emphasize that the technological and political forces are not independent of each other, and that the role of power is more dominant. The technological requirements may vest power in the hands of experts, such as physicians in the implementation of the Child Health and Disability Prevention Act in California (Goggin 1987). Yet power relations are dominant because they ultimately influence the very choice of the service technologies themselves. For example, Brodtkin (1986) describes how the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) used its power to coerce states into implementing quality control procedures in their welfare payment systems. Unless states introduced effective technological procedures to reduce

their error rate for overpayments, their federal funding would be withheld. (HEW did not consider underpayment errors to be a problem).

Fig 3. presents a simple cross-tabulation of the technological and political forces and their predicted impact on social policy implementation.

[Fig. 3 about here]

### The Policy Stimuli

The technological requirements and the distribution of power are influenced by the policy stimuli. We identify three such stimuli: program design, resources, and stakeholders. By program design we refer to policy specifications regarding the target population, the needs to be addressed and the services to be provided (Alexander 1985: 413). Thus, program requirements explicitly or implicitly articulate a theory of causation and the technological means to achieve the desired outcomes. In other words, program design reflects the degree of technical rationality imbedded in a policy. Thompson (1967:14) defines technical rationality as the extent to which the specified actions do in fact produce the desired outcomes, and whether the results are obtainable with the least necessary expenditure of resources. Other things being equal, the greater the technical rationality of the policy, the easier will be the implementation process. Several attributes of the program design influence its technical rationality: a) the scope of the program; b) the validity of its theory of causation; and c) the specificity of program requirements. When the program design encompasses a large target population, multiple needs and many services, it is more difficult to sustain technical rationality. Similarly, when the validity of the theory of causation is unknown, cause and effect relations become uncertain and unpredictable, and a greater reliance is placed on trial and error strategies.

Fig. 3. The Impact of Power and Technology on Difficulty of Implementation

		Distribution of Power	
		Concentrated	Dispersed
Technological Complexity and Uncertainty	Simple/ Certain	Easy	Difficult
	Complex/ Uncertain	Moderate	Very Difficult

The program design thus influences the technological requirements and specifications -- especially their degree of complexity and uncertainty. The program design will determine how much of a "liability of newness" will be experienced by the implementors. To the extent that the design calls for a technology that is not readily available in the environment, the greater will be the liability of newness. One of the reasons why many social programs seem to emulate previous programs is because they tend to rely on proven models in order to reduce this liability. For example, many of the youth employment programs judged by Levin and Ferman (1985) to be successful were modeled after or evolved from pre-existing programs.

We refer to the groups and organizations whose participation and cooperation is needed to operationalize a policy as stakeholders. The stakeholders include the organizations vested with the authority to implement the policy; those in charge of monitoring compliance with the policy; providers of resources; and the potential beneficiaries. One way to identify these stakeholders is by the decision makers whose agreements are required for the implementation of the policy (Pressman and Wildavsky 1979). Nakamura and Smallwood (1980: 46) use the term actors to include "policy makers, formal implementers, intermediaries, administrative lobbies, powerful individuals, policy recipients or 'consumers,' the mass media, and other interested parties" who may attempt to "exercise political leverage within the implementation environment." We believe that such a definition is too open-ended. We propose that it is more theoretically sound to define stakeholders by the fact that they control a commodity that is needed for the implementation of the program. The commodity may be tangible, such as a service or expertise to be contracted, or intangible, such as the provision of authority, support and legitimation. Yet it is the need for and control of

such a commodity that defines the political arena of the implementation process. In order to obtain the commodities needed for implementation, exchanges will have to be made among the stakeholders, and these exchanges will be governed by power-dependence relations which are the essence of the political process (Hasenfeld, 1983). As we will show, the distribution of power among the stakeholders and the coalescence of power will be a function of the need for the commodity controlled by each stakeholder and the availability of the commodity elsewhere (Cook 1977).

Resources typically refer to the availability and allocation of money, personnel, expertise, skills, and facilities (Edwards 1980). However, they also include incentives or inducements for participation in the implementation process as well as sanctions for non-participation. Many federal social policies are in a form of grant-in-aid which provide inducements to the states to implement them. Other policies, such as school desegregation, may impose sanctions in a form of withdrawal of resources for non-compliance.

The availability of resources and their allocation as specified by the policy influence both the composition of the stakeholders and their relative power. A policy that is rich in resources may attract many stakeholders offering their commodities. On the other hand, if these resources are allocated to only a few stakeholders, power is likely to be more concentrated. Resources will also influence the technological requirements because of the limits they set on economic feasibility. Technological choices will be constrained not only by program design but also by the available resources. Thus, a decline in resources may result in redefining the target population and addressing fewer needs; reducing the range of appropriate services; and altering the manner in which services are to be provided (Danzinger and Ring 1982, Kimmich 1985).

### Technological Requirements

The pursuit of technical rationality requires implementation decisions in three interrelated areas: client attributes, knowledge, and operations (Hasenfeld, 1983). Whether the clients are individuals or organizations, a series of decisions has to be made about their proper identification, assessment and classification. In the case of school desegregation, one of the most vexing problems facing the implementors was to develop administrative guidelines to assess schools' compliance with Title VI (Radin 1977). In the case of the GAIN welfare and work program in California, the technological decisions involve complicated operational specifications for determining client eligibility, granting temporary or permanent deferral from the program, and evaluating employability.

While these decisions are technological, they are also normative. That is, they involve value choices about "desirable" client attributes. These choices are inevitably influenced by the power relations among the various stakeholders who may hold conflicting norms and values, as clearly manifested by the difficulties in formulating acceptable designations of school compliance with Title VI (Radin 1977). Indeed, the more contentious the value conflicts about desirable client attributes, the more difficult and problematic is the technical specification of these attributes.

Decisions about the knowledge to be deployed involve the choice and combination of intervention techniques believed to produce the desired results. Brodtkin (1985) recounts the decisions made by the management of the Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare to reduce welfare error rates. The first decision was to develop a computer link to the Social Security Administration to feed social security numbers directly to the Department. Failing to reduce the error rate, it was followed by notifications to all

recipients lacking such a number to bring their number in or apply for one. This was followed by a project that involved major reorganization of the record-keeping system including extensive case review. Then, a new policies manual and extensive staff training on how to use it was instituted. This was followed by establishing quotas for each worker on the number of cases they must periodically review to redetermine eligibility and benefits. Finally, the Department developed a new quality assurance system which included teams to review 80 percent of all redetermination cases at each local office and calculate error scores.

As this example highlights, the choice and combination of intervention techniques is typically a process of trial and error in which assumptions about causation are put to an empirical test. In Massachusetts' case, the desired results were very specific and concrete: reduction in overpayments. When the desired results are broad and less tangible, the uncertainty and complexity surrounding the assembly of the intervention techniques increases considerably. These decisions too cannot escape normative considerations. Choices among competing techniques that lack clear cause-effect relations must resort to ideologies and beliefs about the relative efficacy of each. For instance, in a study of the implementation of special education reform in Massachusetts, Weatherley and Lipsky (1977) showed that teachers resisted the mandate to discontinue classifying children according to their assessed educability. Although there was an official reduction in the use of such labels, their use continued informally by teachers who believed they needed to sort out and treat differentially children with varying abilities.

The implementation of intervention techniques also requires a series of operational decisions about the organization and sequencing of work activities. Specifically, choices must be made regarding the work units that

will be assigned to different components of the intervention, and about the coordination mechanisms between work units that will ensure an appropriate workflow. Sequencing and coordination of work is a particularly critical issue in the implementation of most social policies, since intervention techniques often require the involvement of several organizational units or the contracting out of important tasks to other agencies.

#### Technology - Structure Fit

As the previous discussion indicated, implementation of the technological requirements influences the organizational design of the implementing agency and its interorganizational relations. It is here that the fit between technology and structure becomes a critical variable in the evolution of the implementation process. The technological requirements must be translated into organizational and interorganizational arrangements which meet the technological exigencies. This translation process involves an array of decisions about the design of jobs and positions, the grouping of work units, intra-organizational coordination (both horizontal and vertical), and interorganizational linkages and coordination (Van de Ven and Ferry 1980). However, existing organizational and interorganizational structures are frequently one of the chief obstacles in attaining such a fit. Goggin (1987), for example, attributes part of the failure of implementing the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) program for poor children in California to the fact that the screening program did not fit into the existing medical care system.

The ability to attain a fit between new technological requirements and the existing environment is influenced by the amount of power that can be mobilized to overcome both intra- and interorganizational resistance to change. Lacking such power, the implementors may be forced to alter the

technological requirements and, hence, the program design to conform to current structural arrangements. Goggin (1987) demonstrates this by what he terms the "successful" implementation of the Child Health and Disability Prevention Act in California (CHDP). In contrast to the failed EPSDT program, private physicians were given control over the design of CHDP, resulting in a broadened target population that allowed them to screen all children rather than only poor children.

#### Power Relations and Inter- and Intra-organizational Relations

The mobilization of power among the stakeholders is indispensable to the implementation process, for it is the currency with which cooperation and compliance are attained. As suggested earlier, the stakeholders control commodities or resources that are needed for the implementation of the social policy. In turn, stakeholders become interested in implementation because they wish to gain access to the resources to be distributed by the new policy, or they hope to minimize the costs that might be imposed on them. While some or all of the stakeholders may already have ongoing exchange relations, the implementation process results in the transformation of these relations and the restructuring of the interorganizational network. In such a network, the power of each stakeholder over implementation is a direct function of its control over resources needed by others, and an inverse function of the availability of these resources elsewhere (Cook 1977).

Stakeholders exercise their power to protect and advance their values, interests and resources, and it is through such exercises that power is mobilized. Indeed, the "games" described by Bardach (1980) are manifestations of such maneuvering. Without these games, the implementation process could not commence. This is because power is mobilized and exercised as stakeholders exchange resources; in the process, the stakeholders provide the tangible and

intangible commodities needed for implementation (e.g., funding and legitimation) and obtain those resources which advance their own values and interests. Thus, coupled with the technological requirements, the power relations form the structure of the interorganizational network that is used for the delivery of the actual services envisioned by the policy.

The distribution of power among the stakeholders will be reflected in the terms of these exchange relations. Some stakeholders will occupy a more central position in the network because they are responsible for the allocation of the resources made available through the policy. Others gain power because they mediate the flow of resources among several stakeholders. For example, although California's GAIN welfare and work program is financed by the state, each county welfare department develops its own contractual relations with various service providers. Therefore, the county administrators who review and approve the contracts wield considerable influence over program implementation.

Power is mobilized through several strategies, ranging from competition to bargains and coalitions (Benson 1975). Power may also be concentrated when a stakeholder or small group of stakeholders have a monopoly over critical resources, though it is rare in a politically pluralistic society for implementors to have such control. Hence, the most frequent strategy to concentrate power is through coalition-building. The participation of the implementing agency in such a coalition provides it with power to obtain cooperation and compliance from other stakeholders. However, the cost of such participation is acceptance of the values and interests of the coalition members, which may not be identical to those of the implementing agency.

Power relations also occur within the implementing agency. Because various organizational units must be involved in the implementation process --

for instance, an organization's planning, operations, and finance departments -- they also must develop linkages with each other on the basis of the resources each controls and needs. When power is concentrated in one department, it can more readily impose its requirements on the others, thus making implementation relatively easy. In contrast, when power is dispersed, considerable intra-organizational negotiations must take place simply to forge an internal working coalition -- to say nothing of the negotiations that may be necessary outside of the agency. Thus the distribution of power within the implementing organization are reflected in its emerging division of labor and internal control system (Hasenfeld 1983).

Derthick's (1972) study of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's failed effort to create model communities on federally-owned land illustrates the importance of power relations to the implementation process. On an intra-organizational level, HUD depended on the cooperation of all of its organizational units to make the initiative work, but instead found that the program created competition among its various bureaus for the available resources, and generated resentment among its regional offices because of the added administrative burdens they were asked to bear. On an interorganizational level, HUD was expected to coordinate its efforts with several other federal agencies: the General Service Administration, the Department of Defense, and the Department of Justice. Yet when the White House eventually granted HUD ultimate decision-making authority over the initiative, the other agencies lost their ability to influence the program and consequently became less willing to bear the costs of contributing to it -- and HUD was powerless to induce their cooperation. Similarly, at the local level, HUD lacked any incentives for city governments and political leaders to

become involved in the program; many of these local officials later became vocal opponents of the program.

#### The Service Delivery System

The service delivery system embodies the intra- and interorganizational arrangements through which the actual services are provided. It processes and transforms the behavior of individuals or the performance of organizations that are the target of the policy. Such a system consists of both the actual mechanisms for delivering services and the decision-making and resource allocation processes that determine what services are provided and how. In the language of process theory, the service delivery system is the final cause of the implementation process, reflecting all that has occurred before.

#### Feedback Loops

One of the unique characteristics of implementing social policies is the existence of feedback loops between policymaking and policy evaluation which, in turn, influence the implementation process. The feedback loops connecting the service delivery system, the implementation structure, the driving forces and the policy stimuli may result in changes in the original policy. For example, Bardach's (1980) description of a mental health reform act in California reveals that a number of adjustments were made to the act after it went into effect. One change enabled county mental health agencies to provide mandatory outpatient treatment for persons with psychopathic indications, even though the principal thrust of the original bill was to restore the civil liberties of persons alleged to be mentally ill. The amendment was introduced to rectify perceived inadequacies in the service delivery system after a number of violent crimes were linked to people who had had some record of

mental illness, but who were remaining unserved by the state's voluntary treatment facilities.

The feedback loops stemming from policy evaluation include information which has both technological and power implications. At the technological level, the evaluation may precipitate changes in the technical requirements and thus program design. As a source of power, the evaluation can be used to alter power relations by giving certain stakeholders, including policymakers, an added advantage in changing the policy stimuli. For example, in the implementation of a nationwide compensatory education program (Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965), program audits revealed extensive misuse of federal funds and violation of federal regulations. This information gave considerable power to stakeholders who favored the program -- especially civil rights and antipoverty groups -- to have the Department of Health, Education and Welfare develop stricter program requirements. Congress then followed suit by passing amendments which tightened up the Act (Mazmenian and Sabatier, 1980).

### Conclusion

The model we have proposed attempts to provide a synthesis of several dominant strands in the accumulating research on implementation. It does so by offering a more coherent theoretical framework which we define as "techno-political" because it focuses on the two interrelated forces that drive the implementation process -- technological requirements and power relations. The techno-political perspective is firmly anchored in two interrelated organizational theories: contingency and resource dependency. Contingency theory draws our attention to the structural issues -both inter and intra organizational - that emanate from the need to implement the technological

requirements of the policy. Resource dependency theory identifies the processes of power mobilization needed to obtain the resources and participation of the various policy stakeholders, and the consequences of such mobilization on the inter and intra organizational arrangements that emerge and determine the actual service delivery system (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978; Wamsley and Zald, 1973). Both theories pay special attention to the impact of the environment - technological and political - and changes in it on the implementation process, thus recognizing that implementation is an evolutionary process. While recognizing the linkages between policymaking, implementation and evaluation, and the iterative process between policy and action, the techno-political model is able to define the unique domain of implementation to include the policy stimuli, the driving forces, and the implementation structure. Furthermore, the integration of the two organizational theories - contingency and resource dependency - can provide the theoretical convergence and coherence needed for the study of implementation.

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