From "Whether" to "How": The Varied Roles of Ideas in Politics

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The role that ideas play in politics has long been appreciated more by the newspaper reader than the average political scientist or sociologist. Dismissed by Marxists and other materialists as a mere smokescreen that powerful actors use to mask their interests, and seen by rational choice theorists as, at best, focal points for rationally self-interested actors (Bates, de Figueiredo and Weingast 1998), ideas have begun to be taken more seriously in political analysis over the past 20 years (Stone 1988; Peter Hall 1989, 1993; Skrentny 1996, 2002; Dobbin 1994; Rueschemeyer and Skocpol 1996; Berman 1998; Lieberman 2002; Steensland 2006; see Campbell 2002 and Berman 2001 for reviews). While Heclo introduced the idea that policy-makers "puzzle" as well as "power" in 1974, it has been only recently that scholars have begun to examine in detail the various ways that ideational factors can interact with interest group, electoral or state-centered accounts (Weir 1992; Skrentny 1996; Zollars and Skocpol 1994).

Of course, cultural analyses of politics have not always been in such disfavor—one only needs to think of Weber's famous "switchman of history" metaphor. But for much of the post-war period, cultural explanations have been very much on the wane, for reasons that are worthy of an essay of their own. One reason for the anti-idealist turn was a reaction against Parsons' unified theory of culture, provoking a conflict school of political sociology that emphasized inequalities in power and the power of interests. Another was the growth of techniques for quantitative modeling, and the associated emphasis on methodological individualism. The emergence of rational choice theory and the virulent anti-empiricism of postmodern approaches to studying culture further weakened the position of those who would conduct empirical analyses

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of politics employing ideational variable (see John Hall (1993) for one attempt to make sense of these changes).

If Ideas Did Not Matter...

For these reasons, scholars of politics who work with ideas have, until recently, taken a largely defensive posture, seeking to establish that "ideas matter" in an academic terrain that privileges neo-Marxist, structuralist, or rational choice modes of explanation. But while the idea of "ideas" may seem foreign to scholars working in other traditions, the notion that "ideas matter" is one that almost all of us routinely accept as we both participate in and think about everyday social and political life.

Consider what it would mean to assert that ideas did *not* matter. (To be precise, I define an idea to "matter" when it a) shapes people's actions; and b) is not reducible to some other non-ideational force.) At the broadest level, asserting that ideas do not matter would mean that shifting ideals about science, religion, democracy, slavery, colonization, gender, race, and homosexuality, to pick just a few salient examples, either have not appreciably affected how people act, or were themselves the product of technological, economic, or other material forces.[2] Shifts of ideas widely considered foundational to Western civilization, such as the spreading of Enlightenment thought, would similarly have to be either irrelevant or reducible to other forces. Entire disciplines, like intellectual history, would be obsolete. School boards and college committees would stop fighting about the curriculum, and movements to ban books would dry up. The tens of millions of dollars that are spent on think tanks to churn out ideas and public relations firms to market them would be largely for naught. The billions of dollars spent on market research and on advertising would be unnecessary. Consultants of all types, as purveyors of ideas of how to improve practice in different fields, also would be largely out of business. In

politics, people would vote exclusively out of material self-interest: there would no longer be anything the matter with Kansas, and limousine liberals in Cambridge and Berkeley would become anti-tax crusaders. Job seekers would not choose careers because of their "meaning"; college students would stop seeking to "find themselves." Terrorists would not blow up buildings out of visions of religious glory or ideological triumph. There would be no such thing as a thought leader or a visionary.

One could imagine a critics' reply, but such a reply would likely have to concede some role for ideas. A critic might acknowledge that, yes, ideas matter, but that in many cases they matter only instrumentally as means to ends which have been predetermined by other structural or self-interested reasons. A critic might acknowledge that ideas matter in the most fundamental way—as all of our social institutions are in a sense the embodiment of ideas—but that ideas offer little analytic purchase in explaining why a person, group or polity did X instead of Y. A critic might acknowledge that the Enlightenment brought about considerable shifts in our views of science and religion, but argue that that shift was itself the product of broader economic or technological forces. These are all debates that are worth having, but I would submit that given the ubiquity of ideas in all facets of everyday life, the burden of proof lies on the critics to show that ideas do not matter, rather than on proponents to show that they do.

Ideas and Politics: From "Whether" to "How"

Given these realities, the key questions for scholars interested in ideas to investigate are less *whether* ideas matter and more *how* they matter.[3] And here is where social scientists have much to contribute, even working in areas that have been extensively plumbed by other disciplines like intellectual history that have long incorporated ideas into their analyses. By specifying what kinds of ideas serve what functions, how ideas of different types interact with

one another, how ideas change over time, and how ideas shape and are shaped by actors' choices (Hay, this volume), social scientists can provide greater analytic purchase on the question of exactly how ideas matter. In recent years, scholars in the field have begun this move from "whether" to "how," and I build upon many of these insights below.

Of course, specifying how ideas matter is still a considerable task, even if we restrict ourselves to politics as this volume does. Ideas, broadly defined, are central to questions about agenda setting, social movements, revolutions, diffusion, policy choice, the conceptual categories that underlie politics, path dependency and path shaping change, institution building, institutional stability, institutional change, voter identity formation, interest group formation and political coalition building. While much previous work in the domain of "ideas and politics" has been conducted by scholars of the welfare state, over the longer-term a thorough discussion of the topic would include more voices from other sub-fields of political science and sociology, and would also incorporate work from cognitive psychology, linguistics, and even neuroscience.

My task here is more limited, although still daunting in its potential scope. I am interested in policy ideas *per se*, by which I mean ideas of varying levels of generality that define how policymakers should act. Building upon and drawing together the best work in the field, I seek to offer a synthetic analysis of "how" ideas matter in politics: what is known; what is not known; and what areas are in need of further research.[4]

Drawing on Kingdon (1984) and others, I consider ideas at three levels of generality: policy solutions, problem definitions, and public philosophies or zeitgeist.[5] While problems and solutions are familiar terms in some parts of the literature, the broader notions of public philosophies or zeitgeist has been less frequently discussed. I also consider interactions between the levels of ideas, with a particular interest in "upward-flowing" interactions, showing that not

only does the conception of a problem constrain policy alternatives, but that the fate of specific policy solutions can impact problem definitions or even broader public philosophies.

Within each of these categories, I seek to explore why some ideas triumph over others. While the literature is ripe with case studies that show that a particular idea was important in explaining specific outcomes, there has been much less work that has tried to systematically discern what differentiates victorious ideas from their rivals.[6]

Through answering these first two questions—what kinds of ideas matter, and why do some ideas win out over others—I also seek to address a critically important question that has received insufficient attention in the broader welfare state literature: Considering the potential universe of policy options, why does policy take the specific form and content than it does? While this would seem like it should be a central question of political science and political sociology, it has often been ignored by broader theories that are more concerned with the constraints that bound choice than the content of the choices themselves. As Beland and Hacker (2004: 45) write of one such theory, historical institutionalism: "[T]he institutional perspective is considerably more instructive as an explanation of the *prospects* for policy reform than as an explanation of the specific *form* that policy change takes. If the question is merely why the American welfare state is 'smaller' or 'less developed' than European welfare states then it may be enough to cite America's distinctive framework of political institutions. But if the question is why the American welfare state has taken the structure that it has, then systematically unpacking the forces that shape actual policy choices seems unavoidable [emphasis in original]." While historical institutionalism and other leading theories (such as interest groups or rational choice) offer accounts of the forces that govern policymaking, a theory of ideas is needed to explain the content of policy choices.

Three caveats are in order. First, this is still an emerging field, and thus offering firm conclusions at this point would be premature. As a result, my discussion contains as many questions as answers, and I devote space to identifying areas and questions that the "next generation" of research could seek to address. Second, to make this sizable task more manageable, I draw most of the examples from the field I know best, American domestic politics, although I also incorporate some of the most well-known comparative research on ideas. Third, a comprehensive approach to addressing the above questions would need to include a more explicit theory of action, seeking not only to identify the types of ideas that matter, but also how ideas affect actors and how actors affect ideas. I discuss these issues in passing, but they are worthy of an essay of their own (see Hay, this volume).

Three Kinds of Ideas

Although scholars often talk about "ideas" as if they were one concept, there are at least three different levels of ideas that are relevant to understanding the policy process. In the narrowest conception, ideas can be *policy solutions*. Keynesianism is perhaps the most famous policy idea; other obvious examples are smaller class sizes or broken windows policing. The implicit assumption here is that the problem is given (business cycle is too volatile, test scores are too low, crime is too high), the objectives are given (stabilizing the business cycle, raising test scores, lowering crime), and the idea provides the means for solving the problem and accomplishing those objectives. But as many scholars have pointed out, problems and objectives are not pre-established (Rein and Schon 1977, Schon and Rein 1994). To understand this process we also need to understand the roles ideas can play as *problem definitions.* A problem definition is a particular way of understanding a complex reality. Homelessness, for example, can be seen as the product of a housing shortage, high unemployment, or a lack of individual gumption. The

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way a problem is framed has significant implications for the types of policy solutions that will seem desirable, and hence much of political argument is fought at the level of problem definition. Finally, ideas can function as *public philosophies* or as *zeitgeist*. These are broader ideas that cut across substantive areas. A public philosophy is an idea about how to understand the purpose of government or public policy in light of a certain set of assumptions about the society and the market (Heclo 1986). That the local government is more attuned to the needs of the people than the federal government is one such public philosophy. A related idea is the *zeitgeist,* which are a set of assumptions that are widely shared and not open to criticism, at least in a particular historical moment. The zeitgeist includes a disparate set of cultural, social and economic assumptions, which may not be as closely related to the purpose of government as a public philosophy. Keynesian economics in the years between the end of World War II and the early 1970s was an idea that had reached the level of the zeitgeist; the idea of "holding people accountable" has a similar status today. When public philosophies are in open contest, as is usually the case, neither has the status of zeitgeist, but when one emerges as overwhelmingly dominant (as in the New Deal), public philosophies can for a short time become the zeitgeist. These untouchable assumptions obviously have a broad influence on politics (and society) for the period in which they reign.

Dividing ideas into these three analytic categories allows us to ask questions about how each kind of idea works in politics, and to think about interactions between the different levels of ideas. We will consider each of the types in turn, and then together, in the remainder of the essay.

Ideas as Policy Solutions

Policy solutions are both the narrowest conceptualization of the role that ideas play in politics and the most theoretically developed. The key question for these purposes is why some policy ideas become policy while others do not. The work on ideas and policy solutions differs from the more general political science task of explaining why policy choices are made in that the analysis is tied to the properties of the ideas themselves. I consider three prominent models: Peter Hall's view that successful ideas combine policy, political and administrative appeal; John Kingdon's view that policy ideas succeed when entrepreneurs link them to "problem" and "politics" streams; and the work of historically inclined scholars who argue that prevailing ideas are shaped by the contours of past policies.

Building on a cross-national corpus of work on the adoption of Keynesian policies, Hall (1989) points to three factors that are critical in the adoption of a policy idea: *policy viability*, *administrative viability*, and *political viability*. He implicitly suggests that for Keynesianism to be adopted all three conditions must be met, and notes that when one of these three is not in place, such as when the Treasury department was strongly opposed to Keynesianism in inter-war Britain, the policy was not adopted. In particular, Hall's work discredits the naïve or functional view that the intrinsic worth of the idea in solving the problem (policy viability) is sufficient for a policy to be adopted. Other scholars who have studied the role that research plays in policy-making have reached similar conclusions (Weiss 1977, Lindblom and Cohen 1979; Weaver 2000). In part this is because researchers cannot offer the strong causal relationships that policy-makers desire (although they often over-promise to deliver just that) and thus the predicted efficacy of a policy intervention must be considered along with a variety of other political and normative considerations (Rein and Winship 1999). Scholars working in other areas have also

stressed the importance of administrative feasibility (Evans, Rueschemeyer and Skocpol 1985) in domains as diverse as affirmative action (Skrentny 1996), deregulation of airlines and trucking (Mucciaroni 1992), and school standards (Murphy 1990). Particularly in comparison to debates over problem definitions or public philosophies, debates over policy ideas are more concrete and thus subject to considerations of cost and administrative feasibility.

Hall's third factor, "political viability," is so obviously important that it needs to be specified further to be analytically useful. Under one scenario, political viability can simply mean the policy idea with the strongest interest groups backing it, in which case the policy ideas themselves seem to be making little of an independent contribution. In a second scenario, an idea that has a strong policy rationale may triumph over an array of entrenched interests, as happened in the deregulation of the airline industries (Derthick and Quirk 1985). Here political leaders such as Jimmy Carter decided to champion an idea that was supported by research to the broader public in an effort to win electoral support. On issues of high visibility, policy entrepreneurs may be able to triumph over concentrated interests when armed with a plausible idea that has potentially widespread benefits.

A third scenario that mixes the two is perhaps the most intriguing: a new policy idea creates its own backers, either by forging new coalitions or by causing groups to see their interests in a different and new way (see also Schmidt 2001: 169-170). This may be an active process, paralleling Schattschneider's (1960) observation that the most effective strategy for the losers in any political debate is to expand the scope of the conflict to bring in more of the uninvolved players on the previously weaker side. Here interests and ideas are not really in tension and are difficult to disentangle, because some of the most promising ideas will draw strong partners willing to back them (Blyth 2002). Overall, Hall's model effectively highlights

three of the most important determinants of idea adoption, although he leaves largely unspecified the mechanisms by which these determinants come together to affect policy outcomes.

A second model for thinking about the role of ideas in the policy process comes from the seminal work of Kingdon (1984). Kingdon's question is "What makes an idea's time come?" and he answers that three critical streams must come together—problems, policies (solutions), and politics. The political stream—which includes factors like the "national mood," composition of Congress, and major events in the news—functions to open policy windows, and then savvy policy entrepreneurs step into these windows by linking favored solutions to current problems (see also Cohen, March and Olsen 1972). For an idea (in the form of a policy solution) to succeed, it must fit within the prevailing political winds, have an energetic, well-connected and (ideally) powerful person or group pushing it, and it must be perceived as a viable solution to an existing problem.

Kingdon's model makes two distinctive contributions to understanding the role of ideas in politics. First, by emphasizing the role of policy entrepreneurs, he makes a specific claim about how active agents use ideas to make policy. Second, he borrows from the earlier garbage can models to show how solutions often precede the problems that they are supposed to solve. Support for Kingdon's model is widespread, and despite criticism he remains the touchstone for any theoretical discussion about the role of ideas in the policy process (Mucciaroni 1992).

The work of historically oriented scholars adds another important dimension to understanding how some ideas come to be favored over others. These scholars emphasize how policies develop over time, and rightly note that a focus on a short period of time (usually the present) can function to obscure variables that are constant over that period but would not be constant over a longer period (Pierson 2003). Scholars interested in ideas have adapted historical

institutionalists emphasis on path dependence to encompass the "path dependence of an idea," arguing that longstanding models like the Scandinavian welfare state model can continue to affect action and discussion, even as underlying circumstances change (Cox 2001). Taking the branching tree nature of the path dependence model seriously would suggest attention to the following two areas. First, it would urge attention to the role that ideas play in the "critical junctures" that are central to creating diverging paths. The "effects" of a given idea are likely highly context-specific (Skrentny 1996); therefore any responsible investigation of the role of ideas with regard to a particular policy would require a careful reconstruction of the role that the ideas played at the time key decisions were made. Second, a historical approach would suggest attention to the way that policy legacies feed forward in the evaluation of later decisions. This learning process can take place among elite policy-makers (Heclo 1974), but it can also inform the positions taken by social groups who, in turn, are influential actors in later policy decisions (Pierson 1993). While the image of the branching tree may not apply quite as well to the world of ideas as it does to the material world—the repeated failure of universal health insurance in the U.S. has not diminished the ardor of those who believe in the idea—past policy legacies can affect the perceived legitimacy of particular policy options (Dobbin 1994).

Studying Ideas as Policy Solutions: Next Steps

Work to date has done an admirable job in discrediting the naïve technocratic or functional view that ideas that are adopted by policy-makers are chosen simply because of their ability to solve a policy problem. But while this literature has enlarged the stable of theories about which policy ideas are selected and why, this phase of theory generation is only the first step in understanding how policy ideas matter in politics.

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One obvious next step is to try to develop some generalizations about how the processes by which ideas are chosen vary across issues, time, and space. In terms of variance across issues, one might expect that issues that were highly visible, such as schooling or welfare reform, would be more likely to be publicly championed (ala airline deregulation) than ideas that were highly technical or not immediately relevant to the public. In terms of change over time, some have argued for a general trend away from iron triangles and towards more inclusive networks of actors (Heclo 1978); integrating more contemporary work in this vein into the literature on ideas and politics would be helpful. Finally, research suggests differences in how national traditions or past collective experiences affect how nations interpret diffusing ideas (Katzenstein 1996). Cross-national differences are also likely exist in how and where expertise is produced, what kinds of expertise is produced, and in the relationship between these producers and government (Beland 2005: 8-9). Schmidt (2001) provides evidence that differences in the configuration of political institutions can produce different structures of discourse, ranging from broadly inclusive to largely delimited to key policymakers. National differences in how expertise is processed and incorporated (Campbell and Pedersen, this volume) should become part of more refined ideational theories.

Methodologically, one central weakness of the literature is the massive selection bias toward ideas that ultimately become policy. The consequence is that the literature has been limited to identifying necessary factors (such as the Hall three factors model or Kingdon's three streams), but without equivalent negative cases, there is no way to delineate sufficient factors (Harding, Fox and Mehta 2002). This is not simply an academic issue; an absence of negative cases can also mean an inattention to the second and third faces of power (Bachrach and Baratz 1962; Lukes 1974), because the analysis is limited to what actually appears on the agenda. This

is not a problem that should be intractable; future studies could identify a range of plausible possibilities at a given point in time, and then seek to isolate the reasons why some ideas were more successful than others, or, over a longer period of time, try to understand why some options remained on the table and others were excluded.

Much work also remains to be done in specifying the processes by which some ideas come to be favored over time. One way to see this is as a two stage process: in the first stage an old idea comes to be discredited and in the second stage a particular new idea comes to be favored (Blyth 2002, Legro 2000, McNamara 1998). Thus far, there has been much more attention to the latter than the former. To put it another way, Kingdon's question of "what makes an idea's time come" has now been quite thoroughly examined; the complementary question of "when is an idea's time up" has received comparatively much less attention. One could imagine that this could happen through an exogenous external event that called the previous consensus into question. Another possibility is that an idea's time could lapse more gradually, as advocates manipulated indicators, symbols, and ordinary news events to create the political space for a new idea (Campbell 1998). Kingdon talks about the process of "softening up" or paving the road for a new idea; there likely often needs to be a slow and steady "wearing down" of the old idea. At the same time, those who are proponents of the idea will actively try to rebuff such efforts, and ward off any attempt at agenda and policy change (Cobb and Ross 1997).

Even once a void has been created, the process by which another solution comes to the fore needs to be further investigated. While concepts like policy feedback have drawn our attention to how these processes play out over time, they do not specify *which* lessons policy-makers will draw from previous experiences, sure always to be a heavily contested process (Beland 2005). For every story about power politics and legislative conflict, there is a back story

that explains which ideas came to acquire the prominence, legitimacy, and backers that they did. It is these periods that are largely out of sight from the point of view of legislative conflicts that should command our attention if we are interested in how the agenda is shaped over time.

At the same time, seeing this as a process with definitive stages—failure of an old idea, followed by a period of uncertainty, and then consolidation of a new one (Legro 2000, Blyth 2002, McNamara 1998)—has its own limitations as a way to understand the rise of new ideas. In many cases, what happens is not the collapse of an older policy, but rather simply the rise of a new set of considerations that make a different set of policies appropriate for approaching the issue area. Baumgartner and Jones (1993) illustrate this process repeatedly, showing, for example, how nuclear power shifted from an economic issue to one of health and safety, resulting in a much different policy regime. While Legro (2000) theorizes that it is the unfulfilled expectations of a policy that provides the opportunity for change, it also can be the sense that the expectations themselves change as the problem comes to have a different definition.

This brings us to the greatest limitation of the literature on programmatic policy ideas, namely that it takes the problems for which these ideas serve as "solutions" for granted. How problems are defined has a substantial impact on which alternatives are chosen (Rein and Schon 1977), and so to ignore problem definition is to miss much of the debate. Kingdon does have a theory of problem definition—policy entrepreneurs redefine problems so as to meet their pre-arrived solutions—but he gives less consideration to the other ways that the problem-definition "stream" may be shaped by politicians, advocates, social movements, and media elites, much of the time in the absence of actual policy solutions. We turn to the question of problem definition next.

Ideas as Problem Definitions

The way that political problems are defined is its own field (Rochefort and Cobb 1994), one that has generated a diverse set of case studies, but not much in the way of theoretical development. Scholars of problem definition reject the idea that political choices are simply the sum of individual, interest group or institutional preferences, and instead offer a model of politics where actors are fighting over how a policy problem or collective purpose should be defined (Reich 1988, Mansbridge 1994, Stone 1988, Rein and Winship 1999). In comparison to many of the models discussed in the "ideas as policy solutions" section above, those interested in problem definition see actors (at least some of the time) less as strategic wielders of ideas, and more as possessors of taken for granted assumptions (Berger and Luckmann 1966) which influence the types of problem definitions and solutions that they favor (Schon and Rein 1994).

Separating out the battle over problem definition from the battle over policy solutions is a critical step in understanding policy development. The distinction between problems and solutions is one that should be familiar given the prominence of Kingdon's early work, but is too often ignored in practice as scholars conflate policy paradigms or problem definitions with actual policy choices, such as in much of the work on Keynesianism (Beland 2005). Problem definitions define the scope of potential possible choices, but within a given problem definition there are still often multiple choices for policy: for example, in my work on education, I argue that standards-based reform, public school choice, vouchers, and charter schools all fit within an educational problem definition that emphasizes improvement on test scores and school accountability. At the same time, the battle over problem definition is critical for understanding agenda setting, because once a problem definition becomes dominant, it excludes policies that are not consistent with its way of describing the issue.

There are three definitional issues that I should mention upfront, in order to situate this discussion in the existing literature. First, problem definitions are at the same analytical level as what Peter Hall (1993: 279) calls "paradigms," in that they describe "not only the goals of policy... but also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing." I prefer to use the term problem definition in this context, however, because while paradigms tend to evoke the notion of a single dominant idea that governs an area, problem definitions evoke the fluid nature of constantly competing ideas that highlight different aspects of a given situation. Second, the process of defining problems is different from "framing" as the latter term has been used in the literature. A problem definition is similar to a frame in that it bounds a complicated situation by emphasizing some elements to the neglect of others, but "framing" has been mostly employed as a term to describe how to package a pre-existing set of ideas to win more adherents to one's position (Beland 2005, Campbell 1998). Consistent with this usage, "framing" is one element in a broader battle over problem definition.[7] Third, while some scholars have insisted upon the analytic separation of normative and empirical or causal ideas (Campbell 1998, Goldstein and Keohane 1993[8]), I follow Putnam (2002) in arguing against the fact/value dichotomy. Problem definitions generally evoke both normative and empirical descriptions in ways that are usually mutually reinforcing.

Key questions for understanding problem definition are: 1) how do political problems get defined; and 2) why does one problem definition prevails over another in a particular dispute. Since there is no grand theoretical synthesis that answers these questions (Rochefort and Cobb 1994), I draw eclectically from literature in the construction of social problems, problem definition, and agenda change.

How Do Political Problems Get Defined?

In contrast to approaches which see political problems as either a) imposed by hegemonic elites, or, b) as a reflection of the "social psyche" of the public (Gamson 1990), I argue instead c) that problem definition is a contested process among players with varying levels of power and persuasiveness. This view remedies many of the drawbacks of the other two. In comparison to the social psyche view, it specifies a role for active agents, allows for a diversity of views within the population, and explains how some of the many social problems become political problems. In comparison to the hegemony view, it allows for a wider range of groups and forces to influence debate, while not ignoring the role of power differentials among the claimants.

This approach has roots in the social construction of problems school (Blumer 1971, Spector and Kitsuse 1977), which sees problem definition as a negotiated process among claimants with various points of view. The social problem constructionists are interested in how areas that are "conditions" move from taken for granted aspects of everyday life to social problems that are worthy of government attention. The emergence of a social problem usually followed a model of "naming, blaming and claiming" (Felstiner, Abel and Sarat 1980-81). "Naming" a problem meant, for example, to take the phenomena of traffic accidents, and label it as one of "automobile safety," as opposed to unsafe driving. "Blaming" was to identify the causal agent (the car manufacturers), and "claiming" was to suggest that the government should act to ensure automobile safety. In turn, those opposed to the policy will make counter-claims, in an attempt to deny the existence of the condition, reject the claim of causal responsibility, or shift the emphasis to other causes or remedies (Cobb and Ross 1997). Although the "emergence of social problems" paradigm is too restrictive to cover the wider question of how political

problems get defined and redefined, the model's emphasis on claimants and counter claimants tussling over responsibility, emphasis, and issue definition is useful and broadly applicable.

It may, however, overstate the strategic aspects of the process of issue definition. While the "conflict" view of problem definition is clearly more realistic than the consensus or elite manipulation models described above, I want to note two important caveats to this discussion as it has proceeded thus far. First, purveyors of problem definitions may not be consciously aware that they are contributing to a struggle over problem definition. Media actors, in particular, may do much to further one definition of a problem over another, without knowing that they are doing anything beyond "objective reporting." Even advocates may not be aware that there is a struggle over "problem definition" going on, and may simply take for granted their own assumptions about how to see the problem (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Second, while the competing claimants model implies that participants commitment to particular frames is fixed, when in fact they are often fluid and malleable. If individuals or groups are not committed to a particular problem definition for other strong reasons (e.g. material or professional self-interest) their understanding of an issue may shift in the course of debate.[9] With these caveats in place, however, it is still the case that trying to understand how *a particular problem definition (or set of problem definitions) emerges from a process of multiple sets of actors advancing initially conflicting problem definitions* is the most fruitful approach advanced thus far. Note that this analytic framework does not require that the actors be aware of their role in this process.

It is also worth making a further distinction between the process of problem definition in an arena where a political decision is at stake (in Congress, the courts, school boards, and so forth) and problem definition where this is not the case (in the media, in the academic literature, in casual conversation among individuals), because the process differs in each context. Where a

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political decision needs to be made, the fight will usually be over the policy itself. Problem definition is generally in the background; it enters into the discussion surreptitiously as each argument for or against the policy implicitly privileges one problem definition over another. In contrast, discussions in the media or the academic literature are more often explicitly about how to define an issue, in part because the goal may simply be to explore different positions, and in part because there is no imperative to reach a decision. Arguments about policy in a decision-making arena may take place about the implications of a policy *within* a given problem definition (is the proposed solution efficacious, affordable, administratively feasible, etc), or it may take place *among* problem definitions, as opponents highlight considerations not captured by the initial framing. In either case, those who advocate for a policy that is ultimately adopted can be said to be victorious in the battle over problem definition as well, for their definition (or definitions) of the problem are the ones that have been adopted by the majority of the decision-makers. Because my interest here is in politics, the discussion below focuses largely on decision-making arenas.

What Determines Which Problem Definition(s) Prevail?

The previous section establishes that to understand political problem definition is to understand how a given problem definition (or set of problem definitions) is chosen from a larger universe of potential problem definitions, but it begs the most interesting question: What determines which problem definition(s) prevails? I have identified six sets of factors: 1) the power and resources of the claimants; 2) how claimants portray the issues (framing); 3) the venue or context in which the problem is heard; 4) which claimants establish ownership over the problem; 5) whether there is a policy solution for a given problem definition; and 6) the fit

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between the problem definition and the broader environment. Some of these factors imply substantial intentionality on the part of the actors; others do not.

1. Power – It almost goes without saying that the resources each "side" can bring to bear are critical in any fight over problem definition. But it is also true that the power of the sides should not be seen as entirely exogenous to the issue framing process; the re-framing of an issue can change the way that the balance of forces are arrayed. Schattschneider (1960) points out that in any fight, there are many more that are unconcerned than there are mobilized on either side, and that therefore it is to the advantage of the weaker side to find a way to frame the issue that will bring in more of the uninvolved bystanders on their side.

2. Portrayal of issues – The rhetorical strategies that claimants employ in advancing a given problem definition are also key to their success (Stone 1988, Campbell 1998). A short (not nearly exhaustive) list of what I see as the most important and interesting of these strategies is below. None of these strategies are required for successfully defining an issue, nor does any guarantee victory. An additive model where the more such strategies one employs, the more likely one is to win one's definition of an issue seems likely accurate.[10]

- Establishing *causality* is often the central axis upon which problem definition rests.

- Citing favorable *numerical indicators* is an important (if obvious) aspect of lending credibility to one's claims in a world of claims and counter claims.

- Utilizing *symbols* or *stories* are crucial ways of simplifying a complex reality in a way that is likely to be favorable to one's definition of the problem.

- Shifting the *burden of proof* is another favored strategy that those who begin as losers on a political issue can use to their advantage.

- Whose *metaphors* are accepted is another critical battleground in the fight over problem definition. As Stone (1988) has pointed out, "Buried in every policy metaphor is an assumption that if *a* is like *b*, then the way to solve *a* is to do what you would do with *b*."

- Invoking symbolic *boundaries* (Lamont and Molnar 2002) is often an effective way of advancing one's claims in politics.

- Tying one's definition of a problem to a widely accepted *cultural symbol or value* is another way to advance one's problem definition (Gamson and Modigliani 1987).

One caveat to this discussion, raised initially by Winship (p.c.): The factors listed above are essentially static attributes about ideas or the way that they are presented. Actual debates are determined in part by these factors, but also by the order in which claims are presented and rebutted, and more generally the rules that govern the public conversation. These factors could profit from greater elaboration.

3. *Context or venue* – Baumgartner and Jones (1993) have stressed that a key aspect of how favorably a claim is received is the context or venue in which it is heard. They point out, for example, that "an agriculture committee in Congress is more likely to view pesticides as a way of increasing farmers' profits, while an environmental group is more likely to focus on the negative health effects of the same issue." Since pesticides are in fact both helpful to farmers and harmful to the environment, which issue definition prevails is largely dependent upon where the

claims are heard. Advocates' efforts to steer school equity away from Congress and to the courts is one obvious example of shifting venues in the hopes of getting a better hearing.

4. *Problem ownership* – The social problems literature has stressed that sorting out who can claim "ownership" over a social problem is an important factor in problem definition (Gusfield 1981, Schneider 1985). Fights over problem definition are also often fights over who has authority to define the problem and what kind of expertise is relevant. Schools are often such a battleground, where politicians, business leaders, teachers, parents, and community representatives all claim to have distinctive and authoritative expertise.

5. *Availability of policy solutions* – Kingdon (1984) suggests that successful problem definitions are accompanied by viable policy proposals. (This may be particularly true in a decision-making arena, and less true in media and academic arguments.) The opponents of war in Iraq, for example, were substantially weakened because their proposed course of action—presumably a mixture of continued sanctions and tough diplomacy—was perceived at the time as having been tried and failed. Revelations that sanctions were in fact effectively controlling Saddam Hussein's pursuit of weapons were significant precisely because they offered opponents of the war an argument that their preferred policy solution would have been effective at controlling the threat.

6. *Fit between problem definition and environment* – Whenever a problem definition put forward by a political claimant resonates with that held by the public or the media, its chances of success are enhanced considerably. But which comes first—how the public thinks about a problem, how the media frames it, or how political actors define it? Causality obviously runs in every direction. Baumgartner and Jones (1993) examination of smoking and pesticides suggest

that changes in media tone produce changes in political problem definition (and policy) and public opinion follows only later. Of course, those pushing for change (particularly outsiders) often try to use the media to make social claims or redefine issues, so there is no reason to see media framings as necessarily the first link in the causal chain.

Embracing Complexity: Next Steps in Problem Definition

Political problem definition is an extremely complicated process. Any of the elements that I have touched upon above could profit from further elaboration. Here I confine my discussion to three aspects of problem definition that run through the entire literature and are systematically underdeveloped:

Actor agency and cognition – There is a tension about intentionality contained in much of the discussion above. It is clear that, in general, actors are both shaped by available cultural repertoires and try to act strategically within these constraints (Sewell 1992). But this doesn't tell us how problem definition really works. Should we understand problem definition as a fight, with clear sides, which at the end produces a victor? Or should we see it as a process, in which one problem definition emerges from the morass? The first version assumes too much actor awareness and intentionality;[11] the second specifies no actors at all. The truth clearly lies in between, with some actors more aware than others of their role in the process of problem definition. At one extreme, Winship and Berrien (1999) describes a process of cops and ministers trying to figure out how to take action on the crime problem in Boston as one of experimentation and only retrospective sense making. A problem definition emerged as a way to construe actions already taken. At the other, Zollars and Skocpol (1994) describe the way that the early Social Security Board consciously worked to define Social Security as "self-reliant individualism" in order to win public backing for the program. Which one of these is the more

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common pattern? Is problem definition a process that can frequently be consciously manipulated? How often does a problem definition emerge that no set of claimants was initially pushing? What factors make one or the other more likely? These questions go to the heart of how much control human beings have in shaping our future.

A related question has to do with whether "problem definitions" is too broad a unit of analysis. DiMaggio (1997) has urged sociologists to pay attention to the findings of cognitive psychologists that suggest that humans hold very fragmented and contradictory beliefs, which are much less unified than the concept of problem definitions might suggest. An exploration of how people construct broader problem definitions out of these smaller fragments, and how stable these broader problem definitions are in the face of different kinds of challenges would shed interesting light on this field.

Linking Across Problem Definitions – Scholars of problem definition have generally focused on how a particular issue was defined, either at a critical juncture (Skrentny 1996) or over time (Baumgartner and Jones 1993), at the expense of studying how the framing of issues interacts with one another. There is clearly much "cultural borrowing" in problem definition (Skrentny 2002) – consider for example the way that gay leaders seek to utilize the civil rights frame developed by black leaders. This is captured, to some degree, in the concept of "metaphor," discussed above, but to label it does nothing to answer the critical questions: At a micro level, when is the borrowing of a frame likely to be successful, and when not? How do we understand when boundaries are going to be drawn that limit the broader applicability of a metaphor? At the macro level, does "cultural borrowing" mean that metaphorically similar issues will travel in similar cycles, or is the simple fact of a rhetorical connection too tenuous for that?

A related point is that even within an issue area, there are likely to be multiple potential questions, each yielding its own set of conflicting problem definitions. For example, in education, there are fundamental questions about the purpose of schooling, about what should be taught, about what methods should be used, about how the school system should be organized, and about who should receive what kind of training. How one set of these questions is answered may affect the way that others are likely to be judged. Analyses of issues which suggest that only one (binary) problem definition is at stake (for example Baumgartner and Jones' (1993) argument that the tone of media coverage on pesticides shifts from economic benefits to environmental dangers) are too one dimensional to capture these kind of complex interactions.

Integrating the Social and the Political – Finally, the split between contemporary sociologists focusing on the construction of social problems (largely in the media and outside the political process) and political scientists focusing on political problem definitions largely within the political process has had unfortunate implications for our understanding of political problem definition. Any thorough understanding of how an issue developed would need to understand changes in the societal background, changes in public opinion, changes in media portrayal, all of which feed into, and are informed by, decisions in the political arena. Kingdon's description of the way that policy alternatives are largely debated among specialists misses that the way that the specialists' understandings develop is influenced not only by technical considerations, but also by these broader currents.

Consider, for example, the Supreme Court's 2003 decision on affirmative action. A simplified version of the story might run as follows: Initially prompted by the civil rights movement and legal changes in employment law, companies, schools, and other institutions like the military initially employed affirmative action either under bureaucratic pressure (the EEOC)

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or out of a desire to right past wrongs. Over time, these rationales faded, as EEOC pressure was minimized under Reagan, and the passage of time made the righting of past wrongs seem like a less urgent priority. But over time, these institutions saw organizational benefits to affirmative action: specifically a diversity of viewpoints, and the organizational legitimacy conferred by a diversity of personnel (Dobbin and Sutton 1998). These organizational benefits led these institutions to advocate for continuing affirmative action, even if the initial rationales were no longer compelling. The Supreme Court, in turn, looked out at this changed landscape, and quoting briefs from these institutions, upheld the diversity rationale of affirmative action. The problem definition that the court (the political actor in this case) ultimately embraced was one that was heavily informed by societal changes, and elite opinion about the consequences of those changes. There is no way to understand this process if societal changes are seen as somehow "exogenous"—any complete accounting must link changes in society, politics and the intermediaries that link the two.

Ideas as Public Philosophy or Zeitgeist

Ideas also matter at an even broader level, that of public philosophy or zeitgeist. Recall that I have defined a political philosophy as a view, often voiced by political parties, about the appropriate role of government given certain assumptions about the market and society, whereas the zeitgeist is a disparate set of cultural, social, or economic assumptions that are overwhelmingly dominant in public discourse at a given moment in time. Both public philosophies and the zeitgeist are widely influential and difficult to study precisely because they are so inter-related with the dominant events of the moment. Explaining why there was a "revolt against big government" in the 1980s, for example, seems equivalent to explaining the origins of

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the tax revolt, the shifting approach of the Republican party to racial politics, and the changing view in popular culture of Wall Street to name just a few potentially salient factors. Perhaps for this reason, most scholars have simply modeled the "national mood" into their models as an exogenous independent variable (Kingdon 1984) and have not made it the central *dependent* variable (but see Heclo 1986), although it does sometimes appear as an outcome variable in studies of communities (Rieder 1985), political parties (Baer 2000), social movements, or think tanks (Smith 1991). Journalists have been the authors of the most holistic efforts that I know of to make sense of the impact of social and political changes over the past 30 years in America on the prevailing public philosophies (Edsall and Edsall 1991, Dionne 1991). Given that there is not much scholarly literature to critique, and I will limit myself here to a few general comments on what seem like the most promising avenues going forward on two questions: 1) how do these meta-ideas shift over time; and 2) how do these meta-ideas affect specific policy debates?

How Do Public Philosophies or the Zeitgeist Shift Over Time?

The most prominent theories of shift in the national mood are cyclical (Schlesinger 1986, Hirschman 1982). These scholars have noted that American history cycles between liberal periods where the role of government expands and business is viewed skeptically and more conservative periods where business is viewed more favorably and government significantly less so. In another variant, Huntington (1981) posits that America is characterized by a gap between its ideals and institutions, and that periodically reformers try to make the country live up to its ideals, only to be slowly thwarted, creating a vacuum into which the next generation of reformers steps. Scholars have also suggested that given that the underlying terrain of these battles has often shifted considerably, a more appropriate metaphor might be that of a spiral (Schlesinger

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1986, McFarland 1991, Tyack and Cuban 1995)—each cycle brings the battle not back to where it started but to a similar point on a different dimension (or historical period).

Theories that invoke cycles or even spirals may be simultaneously too imprecise for prediction, and too deterministic to allow for the unanticipated developments. While spirals have the advantage of parsimony, more complete explanations would leave more room for indeterminacy, and specify in more detail the mechanisms of change. As imprecise as it seems, explaining the emergence of a particular public philosophy or zeitgeist requires careful historical reconstruction and process tracing. This analytic strategy allows for the interplay of various material and ideational factors, seeking to chart how they were influential in the development of a set of meta-ideas, and also to incorporate the possibility of creative agency on the part of those who helped to bring about the transitions. To take one well-documented example, the Democratic Leadership Council explicitly tried to recast the public philosophy of the Democratic Party more to the center after national election defeats in 1984 and 1988 (Baer 2000). These politicos were in turn influenced by their reading (influenced by media and academic intermediaries) of who voted, what they valued, and how these voters perceived the Democratic Party *vis-a-vis* these values. One could in turn ask why the voters valued what they valued, or why the media emphasized certain issues over others. Like all social science, this could become a process of infinite regress; the expertise of the researcher lies in part in suitably delimiting the analysis.

The process of explaining a shift in the zeitgeist is even more difficult because it has no natural hook like a political party, but the methodological process is similar. If one's question, for example, was how accountability became such a dominant metaphor for framing policy, one would have to go backward in time to where that wasn't the case, and trace it forward. One

might use media citations or content analysis to understand where and why it emerged first, chart how it diffused across substantive areas, and then analyze the broader social changes that contributed to its rise.

How Do Public Philosophies or the Zeitgeist, Once Established, Affect Policy Choices?

If the previous section is about the public philosophy as a dependent variable (how does one come to reign), there are also interesting questions about it as an independent variable (how does it affect subsequent political action). Within a given period, it is preferable to see a public philosophy or the zeitgeist not as a stream that sweeps up everything in its path, but rather as one central input that has significant influence in various different aspects of the policy process. The stream metaphor is over-determining—it fails to explain how *Brown v. Board* could emerge out of the "conservative" 1950s, or how the 2003 *Lawrence vs. Texas* decision overturning the ban on homosexual sodomy could recently be affirmed in another relatively conservative period.

To be sure, there are similarities that run across policy areas within a given period—it is no coincidence that, for example, the indexing of Social Security benefits, proposals for an income floor, the Environmental Protection Act, and the Occupational Safety and Health Act all happened during the first Nixon term. This bunching occurs because meta-ideas affect the policy process in at least three ways. First, the prevailing public philosophies or zeitgeist can significantly affect who gets elected, which in turn affects what is considered and passed on the legislative docket. Secondly, a public philosophy can serve as a kind of meta-problem definition for political actors, providing a way of seeing the public issues that are on their docket. When a new issue arises, these meta-ideas provide a heuristic that tells political actors what aspects of the issue to emphasize and what side to take. Third, meta-ideas can function as a kind of changing cultural touchstone to which actors can appeal in their efforts to advocate for a particular policy

or symbol. Similarly to central values like liberty or equality, these meta-ideas (like markets are more efficient than government programs) provide a way for political actors to gain legitimacy on specific topics that for the audience (public or media) may be unfamiliar terrain. Overall, while this conceptualization suggests that the balance of power among public philosophies or the prevailing zeitgeist can have an important effect on a) who is at the table, b) how those actors think, and c) the types of actions that will be seen as desirable or legitimate, it also leaves room for various other inputs into the policy process, and for the emergence of ideas that run counter to the prevailing winds.

Upward Flowing Interactions Between Idea Types

No paper that lays out a typology would be complete without a discussion of the interactions between the types. It is relatively clear how more general ideas affect more specific ones. Public philosophies are meta-problem definitions that shape how more specific problems are defined, which in turn affects which specific policy ideas seem like viable solutions to the newly defined problem. For that reason, I will focus here on "upward flowing" interactions— how policy can affect problem definitions, how problem definitions can affect public philosophies or the zeitgeist, and finally how policies can affect public philosophies or the zeitgeist. These thoughts are illustrative, drawing on examples of how this has or might work; I do not claim to have a theory that would explain when these outcomes are likely.

Policies to Problem Definitions

Policies provide the battleground for fights over political problem definition, so the success or failure of a policy can make the accompanying problem definition look more or less desirable. The perceived failure of the Great Society programs, for example, make future efforts to frame the poverty problem as one of federal government responsibility a tough sell. Current

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school voucher experiments are being watched closely and their results heavily debated because they have broader implications about the role of choice in education. Policies assert their influence on problem definition when the perceived success or failure of a policy extends beyond the policies itself, and is used to make conclusions about entire approaches of which the given policy is just one example.

Effective policies can also *expand* problem definitions, if they find a way to reconcile multiple goods that previously seemed incommensurable. Community policing provides one example. The primary role of the police, most would agree, is to prevent crime and apprehend those who commit it, but if this can be accomplished through means that do not result in the shakedown of innocent community residents, than this is preferable to more Draconian methods. Successful community policing effectively expands the goal of policing to include both crime-fighting and creating decent community-police relations; once this transition has happened, there is unlikely to be a return to the more narrow definition of policing, unless there is a perception that community policing has become ineffective at keeping the crime rate down.

Problem Definitions to Public Philosophy or Zeitgeist

While a public philosophy or the zeitgeist cuts across substantive areas, it draws its credibility from its interpretation of more specific problem areas. For example, the idea that markets should generally operate without government interference is given a heavy blow by the recent failures of large banks. If the banking problem is defined as an aberration, than the broader public philosophy can remain intact; if it is seen as a systematic problem in the regulation of capitalism today, then the market-oriented public philosophy is dealt a significant blow. One could argue that the leading public philosophy at any given moment in time is the one that can best encompass the area-specific problem definition on the leading half dozen issues

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of the day, although the reverse is obviously also true. It would be interesting to see if one could create a kind of tipping point model, where after a certain number of issues that are prominent in the media are inconsistent with the leading public philosophy, the public philosophy itself gradually changes or is replaced by another.

When actors actively set out to create a new public philosophy, they both utilize and are constrained by problem definitions of existing key issues. Above I mentioned the role of the Democratic Leadership Council in recasting the role of the Democratic Party after electoral defeats in the 1980 and 1984 elections. In trying to remake the party, taking a tough stance on the specific issues of crime and welfare was perceived by these New Democrats as a kind of a litmus test for a group trying to visibly separate themselves from the failures of the "Old Democrats" (Baer 2000). These positions, in turn, helped to shape the emphasis on personal responsibility that marked various aspects of the New Democratic philosophy. While of course it is also true that the New Democrats highlighted these issues precisely because they thought the older Democratic public philosophy was insufficiently oriented toward personal responsibility, the relationship between issue-specific problem definitions and broader public philosophy is a reciprocal one.

Policies to Public Philosophy or Zeitgeist

The best policies literally remake the public philosophy in their wake. The most obvious example is Keynesianism—there is no better way to advocate for the importance of a mixed economy with substantial government intervention than to show that such intervention can successfully manage the ups and downs of the business cycle. By the 1960s, Keynesianism had achieved such a transcendent status. But when Keynesianism proved an ineffective remedy for stagflation in the 1970s, its legitimacy as a remedy was undercut, and the public philosophy of

untrammeled capitalism was given a boost. It should be noted, however, that the idea that the government has some level of responsibility for the broader economy has remained—even libertarians justify their claims with the supply side rationale that these economic policies will produce the greatest good for the greatest number. In this sense, Keynesianism is another example of the way that good policies can produce broader problem definitions that last beyond the policies themselves.

More commonly, policy outcomes have to be interpreted before they can pass into a public philosophy or the zeitgeist. Zollars and Skocpol (1994) show the way the Social Security Board very successfully played this role in transforming social security from a precarious start to the third rail of American politics. Of course, these processes are also open to counter claims, and politically savvy actors may try to kill entire policies because of their potential consequences for the public philosophy. Right-wing strategist and pundit William Kristol did exactly this in the debate over health care in 1994: He warned his Republican colleagues that if middle class Americans saw the benefits of a universal health insurance program, the forces of "big government" might be revived for another generation.

Conclusion

In an age where terrorism forcibly reminds us that some people radically disagree with many of the ideas that govern much of Western life, it is no longer possible to pretend that people are only motivated by an individualistic utilitarian rationality or that ideas are merely a cover for deeper interests. Social scientists, whose professional and often personal identities are largely staked on their ability to traffic in ideas, have ironically been remarkably resistant to the notion that ideas play an important independent role in political and social life. This paper seeks

to move from the rather rudimentary observation (at least to a lay person) that "ideas matter" to flushing out the much richer set of questions about *how* different kinds of ideas, interests and institutions combine to produce political outcomes. What I have outlined above is only the very beginning of an attempt to theorize about this very complex process.

As societies become ever more complicated and the range of normative and empirical ideas proliferates, it will only become more important to capture which ones become dominant and why. In the welfare state literature, for example, it seems simplistic and one-dimensional to continue to speak only in terms of whether the welfare state is expanding or retrenching, when in the past decade, parties from across the political spectrum have adopted a variety of approaches to "modernizing" the welfare state. Many of the most interesting and influential policies today, from welfare reform to school accountability to asset development, have roots on both the left and the right; understanding how these ideas evolved, picked up backers, and were selected over other competing approaches is likely to be as central to understanding the "new politics" of the welfare state as power approaches were to understanding the old.

To reduce politics solely to material interests and strategic calculations is not only to be willfully ignorant of how the world actually works, it is to deny a significant part of what it means for individuals to be human and for societies to be democratic. Individually and collectively, it is in the exchange of ideas that we define who we are and who we hope to become. If, as Louis Wirth (1936) once said, the "most important thing to know about a man is what he takes for granted," then the most important thing to know about a society and its politics are its prevailing assumptions. Understanding how these assumptions become dominant, what role they play in determining policy while ascendant, and why they are replaced by other sets of assumptions are questions that should be at the heart of political science and political sociology.

In an age of academic specialization, these are the kind of broad but still tractable questions that

represent the best of what our disciplines can offer to the wider public.

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Notes

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[2] I would argue that even if these developments were a product of other structural forces, such as economic imperatives, that these forces were themselves shaped by ideas such as individualism and progress.

[3] This is a point that is increasingly being embraced by scholars of ideas in recent years. In his study of the embedding of changing economic ideas, Blyth (2002: 18) writes: "This study, in contrast, aims to demonstrate not only that ideas matter, but precisely when, why, and under what conditions they matter." Similarly, in their study of rhetoric that enabled anti-welfare policy, Somers and Block (2005: 264-265) observe that "once we acknowledge that ideas *do* exercise this independent role, it becomes clear that many battles over social and economic policy should be redefined as conflicts not over *whether* but over *which* ideational regime will do the embedding" (emphasis in original).

[4] See Berman (2001) and Campbell (2002) for other analyses of these issues.

[5] This tripartite distinction is similar in two of its three parts to Kingon's (1984) three streams of policies, problems, and politics. The primary difference in the typology is that my discussion of public philosophy or zeitgeist is focused on meta-ideas that affect debate, while Kingdon's politics stream includes electoral results, the timing of policy windows, the balance of interest

group power, and other primarily non-ideational forces. My discussion of how problems and solutions work also differs from his in a number of ways that will be outlined in the text, but the concepts are the same.

[6] One exception is Legro (2000), which will be discussed below.

[7] See Oliver and Johnston (2000) for a critique of reducing the role of ideas to frames.

[8] Goldstein and Keohane (1993: 25) do note that causal and principled beliefs can be "mixed" but their typology separates the two types of ideas.

[9] Of course, material and professional self-interest are also constructed; how groups come to see their self-interest is critical to understand in any ideational analysis.

[10] The first five items on this list draw heavily on Stone (1988), who offers the most thorough discussion of these issues.

[11] This critique speaks more broadly to the question of active framing, a notion that appears frequently in the social movements literature (Benford and Snow 2000).