Chapter 1

Introduction: Policy Analysis and Ethical Traditions

In the United States, public programs for the poor have been continually pounded by the stormy waves of emotionally charged policy debates. This was most recently demonstrated in the sinking of the federal guarantee of cash aid to mothers with poor children. Despite the new Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF) and the current economic expansion, the poor are, of course, still with us. Now is the time to draw lessons from the demise of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), before the inevitable revisiting of the poverty issue in national politics. The lesson drawn in this work is that policies should be so designed as to successfully navigate the deep-running currents of American beliefs and feelings regarding the poor.

Such deep-running currents are bound up in what are sometimes known as policy "frames." A policy frame is a perspective or viewpoint on a social issue which politicians, the public, and analysts use to make sense of that social issue. Frames are built from culturally powerful symbols existing within a specific political environment:

> Every issue has its own special language and phrases, its characteristic arguments, metaphors, and the like. When events occur that affect policy outcomes, commentary about them

> draws on culturally available idea elements and symbols. The ideas in this cultural catalogue are organized and clustered; we encounter them not as individual items but as packages. . . . One can think of the complete *set* of packages that are available for talking about the issue as its "culture."[1]

For example, the symbol of "dependency" has been central to the political discussion of poverty in the United States. This type of symbol and the frame(s) it invokes set the issue within a context of values and beliefs which help shape reactions to the issue; they call attention to some facts rather than others and delimit the types of actions that are appropriate for addressing the issue. A policy frame will also have a history of usage over time, and often over different types of policies. My thesis in this work is that a policy frame inherited from the nineteenth century has significantly affected U.S. poverty policy debates, and that this has created problems for the design of acceptable policies. My aim is to enable the reader to "step back" from this frame by examining it historically, in order to see more clearly its premises, its limitations, and its potential for guiding the design of more acceptable policy programs. For reasons that I will explain further, I call the continued use over time of a particular frame an "ethical tradition."

My original plan did not involve a long historical perspective. I was intrigued by what seemed to me to be a rut in which welfare debates (primarily focussed on AFDC) had been stuck for the last thirty years or so. Continual blanket denunciations of the welfare system had resulted in little but sporadic incremental changes, always in the same direction: a little more money for job search and job training programs, and a little more encompassing requirements for welfare recipients to participate in these programs. However, the reforms never seemed to settle the issue, and the denunciations soon picked up again where they had left off. Whether TANF breaks this pattern is a question I take up in chapter 4, but my hope in setting out was to avoid the rut by examining the frames invoked in these debates and exploring different possibilities for reframing (altering the frames surrounding) the issue of poverty. I began with two case studies, one that I regarded as typical of poverty policy debates and one that seemed more anomalous, intending to analyze and compare the language involved in each of them.[2]

To my surprise, I discovered similarities in the language of the two cases which I came to believe are traceable to the same origin—but rather

than the liberal individualism usually discussed by social welfare historians, the origin was an offshoot of the civic republican tradition associated with the period during the American founding. While liberal individualism stresses individual freedom and the limitation of government powers to the protection of individual rights, civic republicanism stresses the virtues that citizens must have in order to be self-governing and the role of the government in supporting or undermining these virtues. As the civic republican tradition is generally considered to have largely died out by the late twentieth century, this discovery changed the focus of the work from a few in-depth case studies to a more extended historical picture of the role of civic republican themes in the shaping of U.S. poverty policies.[3]

The central chapters lay out this historical story. Chapter 2 reviews the origins of civic republicanism in America and the development of its offshoot, agrarian republicanism, up until the early twentieth century. The next three chapters are the heart of the work, showing how the symbols of this tradition have affected three areas of poverty policy debates in the twentieth century: homeownership programs for the poor, cash-aid programs, and ideas for building the capital assets of poor people. The final chapter summarizes the research findings and completes the policy analysis, concluding with some suggestions for reorienting the design of poverty policy programs in the light of these findings. The aim of the research is not so much to extract generalizations about how ethical traditions affect policy processes, but rather to identify and solve a problem in the application of this specific tradition to U.S. poverty policy.

In the rest of this introductory chapter I present the theoretical position underlying my method, albeit in a somewhat roundabout fashion. The first three sections present an intellectual history. In them I circle from the concept of policy frames as used in contemporary policy studies, to the older debate over ideology theory, and then back to the present to show how the use of the concept of ideology in American political science led to the concept of policy frames. This will set the stage for the next three sections by highlighting the problem that is at the heart of my theory: the relation of facts and values in policy analysis. In these sections I argue that it is impossible to exclude values from policy analysis, and that the value-dimension of the ethical traditions used to justify policies can be subjected to rational scrutiny. Nonacademic readers may prefer to skip the rest of this chapter and go on to the historical story beginning in chapter 2.

1. POLICY FRAMES IN POLICY STUDIES

The tactic of examining the language used in policy debates arises from two trends in policy studies linked by the concept referred to above as policy frames, although a variety of terms have been used to express the same general concept.[4] One trend centers on addressing the serious problems of theory and method besetting more traditional forms of policy analysis. The other trend is the use of the concept of policy frames to explain the policymaking process, particularly in the literature on agenda setting. To both introduce the theoretical issues and give a sense of the importance of frames in policymaking, I will begin with a brief summary of this policy process literature.

Much of the current use of the concept of policy frames was inspired by Murray Edelman's writings on how political elites use culturally established symbols for the arousal or quiescence of the mass public, although later authors tended to tone down his implications of cynical manipulation.[5] For example, Roger W. Cobb and Charles D. Elder examined the use of such symbols by activists trying to transfer policy issues from a "systemic" to an "institutional" political agenda, and later brought together a variety of research on how the use of symbols helps to structure the interpretation of inherently ambiguous political information.[6] William A. Gamson is another scholar who followed Edelman's lead. He and his associates explored the linkages between media presentations and popular perceptions of policy issues, focusing on the use of sets of symbols which they call "interpretive packages" composed of (1) framing or pattern-organizing elements such as historical examples, metaphors and catch phrases, and (2) reasoning devices such as appeals to principle and ideas about cause and effect.[7]

This line of thought was further developed in the literature on agenda setting. In John W. Kingdon's landmark work he modeled the agenda setting process as a "garbage can" into which relatively independent "streams" of problem definition, policy idea development, and political situations flow and are occasionally "linked" through the efforts of policy entrepreneurs.[8] Although he only touched on the role of values in the definition of social problems and the emergence of viable policy proposals,[9] the literature discussed above would suggest that the way problems, policies, and politics are joined is through the use of familiar symbols to frame a policy issue. Several authors since have focused attention on the use of symbols in the process of problem definition.[10] In addition, many of those building more general theories of the policy process now stress how particular value-

laden viewpoints on a policy issue ("belief systems," "policy images") are used to create the coalitions that dominate particular policy subsystems.[11]

By synthesizing the work described above we can sketch out the relation between policy frames and policymaking. Actors in the policy process draw from a range of culturally familiar symbol-sets (frames) in their attempts to make sense of the social world and to gain or preserve support for the policy ideas they favor. In building political coalitions the affective, emotional associations of these symbols are more important than their cognitive, intellectual associations, but the latter still limit their application and thus advantage those policy ideas to which emotionally powerful symbols can more plausibly be attached. Whenever a policy idea prevails in a political decision the social importance of its associated frame is reinforced, creating a tendency for a particular frame to dominate discussion in an area of policy, and inspiring attempts to adapt it to other issues. Opponents of instituted policies search for alternative frames for interpreting the policy issue from which they can attack the dominant coalition and advance their alternative policies. The end result of this competition is a limited set of policy frames in the public discussion of each issue area, with one of them tending to dominate it at any point in time. In sum, frames are vital in the shaping of public policies.

Beyond the discussion of policy processes, the realization that any policy issue can be (and usually is) interpreted and defined through different frames involving different values and suggesting different solutions has posed a compelling theoretical problem for policy analysts seeking to offer rational advice on policy issues to policymakers. The central issue involves the relation of the analyst to the values embedded in any frame used to interpret a policy issue. Is a "frame neutral" analysis possible? If not, how can the choice of a frame for a policy analysis be justified? But this is not really a new issue, for an older discussion concerning the concept of ideology is the generally unacknowledged grandparent of the current discussion. Reviewing this earlier controversy may help clarify this issue.

2. The Concept of Ideology and Attendant Problems

The term "ideology" has had a long, broad and varied use, but a core meaning can be roughly defined. An ideology is some collectively shared system of ideas and values about human beings and society (not

necessarily a highly logical and coherent system) which evokes emotional commitment and can be more or less deliberately used to inspire coordinated action and legitimate (or de-legitimate) social institutions and government policies.[12] As can be seen, this is quite similar to the definition of a frame. Knotty problems similarly have been associated with the concept of ideology, regarding its use in explaining social behavior as well as the question of the possibility of nonideological knowledge. The latter question parallels policy analysts' contemporary theoretical concerns about framing.

These problems can be highlighted through a quick look at the origins of the concept. The general claim that various sets of ideas and values influence politics goes back at least as far as Aristotle, who recognized a relation between competing beliefs about justice and conflict between social classes.[13] The modern concept of ideology,[14] however, began with a group of French philosophers in the late eighteenth century who were impressed by the development of British empiricism and Sir Francis Bacon's theory of "idols" (mistaken, irrational conceptions). They held that any ideas incongruent with and not based upon sense impressions—religious and metaphysical beliefs were the primary targets—are socially conditioned distortions of reality which scientific observation should carefully avoid. By doing so, scientists would uncover true knowledge of human behavior which could be used to build a more rational social order. They called their technique "ideology," the science of ideas; it was an epistemological forerunner of the objectivist attempt to separate facts and values in social research. In sum, they believed they held the key to avoiding common but mistaken views of the social world. Ironically, Napoleon turned the tables on these philosophers by calling their "ideology" a deluded and socially destructive system of ideas.

Thus, Karl Marx, while accepting the concept of socially conditioned systems of ideas that obscure reality, used "ideologies" as the term for these distorted systems. He rejected the French philosophers' method for getting at social reality on the grounds that ahistorical sense impressions would only reveal contemporary social arrangements, not the general grounds of human behavior. Marx's historically informed theory was an inversion of that of the German idealist philosopher G. W. F. Hegel, who argued that the different thought systems that characterized particular civilizations were part of an historical unfolding of universal Mind. For Marx, class relations based on the organization of production are the pri-

mary basis of social life, conditioning even consciousness; therefore changes in the dominating ideologies reflect changes in the means and modes of production. These dominating ideologies serve to conceal class conflict by justifying class rule. Marx believed his historical analysis of class relations revealed a more objective view of social reality, which had only become possible from the perspective of the imminent end of class rule in history.

When his collaborator, Friedrich Engels, later tried to explicate Marx's ideas, he allowed ideology to provide a causal explanation for people's actions somewhat independent of the socioeconomic causes of behavior. Without this allowance, the assertion that the ideology of a ruling class helped them to control the masses would make no sense; ideology would have no independent motivating force. Reconciling a primary emphasis on the role of class relations based on the mode of production in shaping social behavior with a meaningful role for ideology has been a continuing issue among Marxist theorists.

An alternative perspective came from Max Weber, who broke with Marxism by positing a reciprocal relation between ideological and sociological factors, each having an important effect on the development of the other. Some of his inspiration came from the writings of Frederick Nietzsche, who suggested that all systems of ideas and values are manifestations of a pre-rational will to power. Weber regarded religious or quasi-religious belief systems, expressing a desire to impose order and meaning on the world, to be one of the primary forces shaping different cultures. His method of arriving at causal explanations of social behavior involved using empirical evidence to interpret the subjective state of the individuals involved in collective actions.

Weber conceded that even scientists have an ideological dimension to their thought, as particular sets of ideas and values guide their choice of a subject of study, including which of many potential causal factors are of interest in creating satisfying explanations of facts. Even so, he argued for a fact / value distinction in methodology; while he believed science could help us understand cultural phenomena and thus clarify our own value commitments, he regarded it as powerless to help determine which values were worthy of commitment. Weber's position did not resolve the problem of moral relativism raised by Nietzsche, which was a central issue in the 1920s for German intellectuals grappling with the social disorder of the Weimar Republic. If even scientists and philosophers have an ideological dimension to their thought, how can we judge the relative

superiority of different viewpoints? Fierce debates over the relation between reason, science, values, and politics raged between objectivists, Marxists, romantic antirationalists and those still adhering to metaphysics for a standard of values. Such topics should sound familiar to my contemporary academic colleagues.

These issues are directly related to the concept of ideology. The word carries a negative connotation that some systems of belief about the social world are aberrant, yet the grounds for a valid distinction between ideological and nonideological thinking have been controversial. The influence of socioeconomic conditions on thinking is an important part of the concept, but exactly how this works is obscure. One can question whether nonideological thinking is even possible; for example, can "scientific" thinkers escape the influence of social conditions on their thought? And even assuming they can escape social conditioning, can they escape values in order to be fully "objective" and empirical? Or are *all* thought systems regarding the social world rationally arbitrary, based only upon contingent social circumstances and / or "value preferences?" These are the very problems that now trouble contemporary policy analysts and other social scientists.

Karl Mannheim began to address them by building on the work of Weber and that of the Marxist thinker George Lukacs. He accepted that all perspectives on human society, even those of thinkers who aspire to some type of scientific standpoint, are sociologically and historically conditioned. His "sociology of knowledge" proposed to examine the social bases, conditions, and biases of the various forms of human thought systems. Like Weber, Mannheim saw complex relations between ideas and socioeconomic context; unlike Weber, he believed an investigator could discriminate between ideologies by favoring the more comprehensive and coherent viewpoint over the less so.[15] In essence, he was saying that we all hold ideologies, but some can be judged to be better than others—but only in comparison to each other, not in comparison to some absolutely "objective" standpoint, which is impossible for humans to attain. Modern intellectuals happen to be in the best social and historical circumstances to do the work of ideological comparison, synthesis, and refinement, because they are brought together from a variety of social backgrounds from which they become relatively detached.[16] Not long after Mannheim's thesis was put forward, the German intellectual debate was interrupted by the rise to power of the Nazis. After the war similar debates were to occur outside of Germany.

3. American Political Science: From Ideology to Frames

Apart from Charles Beard's quasi-Marxist early work on the relation between the property holdings and the political thought of the American Founders,[17] there was little sign of any concept of ideology in American political science before the 1920s. Its introduction may be attributed to Charles Merriam and, even more so, to his student Harold D. Lasswell. Lasswell, who had studied Marx, Weber, and Mannheim as well as Freudian psychoanalysis while in Berlin as a graduate student, used the concept of ideology in his argument that political elites exercise power by manipulating the psychological states of the masses. Special symbols (primarily words and combinations of words), because they tap the inner anxieties people have about their social experience, are used by those skilled at this to organize people sharing similar perspectives into groups to support (or attack) the social order. Lasswell hoped that the empirical study of the sources of psychosocial anxieties and the forms of their symbolic expression would be a key to a better world through the scientific understanding of political behavior.[18] One can discern here the original French project of cutting through false systems of thought in order to create a more rational social order.

In the decades from the 1930s to the 1950s the ideologies Lasswell and other American political scientists were worried about were fascism, communism and, for some, McCarthy-style anti-communism. Their defense of liberal democracy against the political movements supported by these systems of thought split into two camps. One camp, heavily influenced by refugee German intellectuals who had experienced the collapse of the Weimar Republic, saw the moral relativism associated with objectivist science and liberal politics as weakening a commitment to the transcendent values that they claimed underlie democratic institutions. They wanted to return to the Western tradition of normative political philosophy and created the political science subfield of political theory, in which the earlier German controversies about relativism, reason, science, values, and politics eventually were to be repeated.

The other camp regarded normative political arguments as part of the problem, and contrasted the conflicts provoked by dogmatic and emotionally charged belief systems with the compromise and stability possible in a system that pragmatically balanced the material interests of the individuals and groups making up the social order. They saw the American

political system as a primary example of such a system, and thought it would be best defended by a value-free empirical study of its actual workings.[19] Their position, like Laswell's, mirrored that of the original French "ideologists," in that they believed a scientific and nonideological view of the social world would help create a better society. Some social scientists even claimed that the political quiescence of the American public in the late 1950s heralded an "end of ideology" due to the success of the modern social welfare state in balancing the needs and interests of different social classes.[20] The political theorists' revival of the German debate was delayed, if only temporarily, by the evolution of the second camp into the behavioralist movement which dominated American political science until the social upheavals of the 1960s.

The behavioralists' modeling of the political process as a system for channeling and balancing self-interested behavior (for example, that of voters and interest groups seeking to advance their "interests" and of politicians seeking to gain and retain power) has continued to be an influential approach in American political science; leading examples are versions of interest group pluralism and rational choice theory.[21] One reason such models are attractive is that they simplify a complex reality in such a way as to create testable hypotheses and guide empirical research. However, as it is obvious that people often act against their self-interest (narrowly conceived) because of other motives, criticisms of the shortcomings of such models have accumulated over the years, in particular aimed at their neglect of the role of ideas in motivating political actors.[22] Much as Napoleon criticized the French empiricists, modern critics have also charged that the behavioralists' models are themselves ideological, with roots in the defense of implicit values and particular political arrangements by intellectuals influenced by their social and historical circumstances.[23]

Ensuing attempts to separate and compare the influence of self-interest from the influence of ideas on political behavior have proven futile; they end in a conceptual and methodological morass.[24] For one thing, what you (or any researcher) think is in your or anyone else's "self-interest" is necessarily based on the values and ideas that you hold. An alternative approach to the importance of ideas in political behavior shifted the focus from the motives of political actors to the organizational context in which they act—in short, emphasizing the functions of institutions, including established forms of political language.

Scholars began using language theory to refine the concept of ideology in the 1960s. One who inspired many from other fields was cultural

anthropologist Clifford Geertz. Wrestling with the question of how thinking is socially conditioned, he found the two most common answers lacking. The idea that the material interests bound up with a person's social circumstances condition their thinking (for example, in some crude forms of Marxism) reflects either a vague or an overly simplistic psychology. But the more sophisticated (Freudian) alternative theory, that the strains inherent to social life are manifested in emotionally charged thought systems, tends to reduce ideology to emotional expression and thus has trouble explaining its social consequences. According to Geertz, the problem is not that there is no truth in these theories, but that they neglect to link psychological cause to social effect through a theory of symbol formulation; that is, the working out of patterns of meaningfulness in language and other symbolic forms: ". . . what is socially determined is not the *nature* of conception but the *vehicles* of conception [emphasis added] . . . thought consists of the construction and manipulation of symbol systems."[25] Ideologies, then, are symbol systems meant to make problematic social situations meaningful in a way that allows people to act purposefully, and are created through social interaction in specific circumstances; they are not merely an expression of material interests or psychological states.

In American political science the trend in applying language theory to social behavior was carried forward by Edelman, mentioned in section 1 of this chapter, who built upon Lasswell's ideas about symbol usage and mass behavior. I have already reviewed some of the policy process literature pursuing this line of thought. In it the use of terms such as "frames," "interpretive packages," and "belief systems" is clearly an attempt to avoid problematic connotations of the term "ideology," particularly the implication of thinking that is somehow distorted. For on that point, it has become doubtful whether any nonideological perspective is possible. The intellectual history presented above indicates that once it becomes clear that people use frames (ideologies) to interpret the social world, inevitably the problem of a researcher's own frame of interpretation follows. It raises the fundamental question of what it means to do social science.

4. The Non-separability of Facts and Values in Social Research

Attempts to create a value-free, nonideological social science have been rooted in objectivism, a philosophy of science with ancestry in the

work of the British and French empiricists with whom I began my story of the concept of ideology. Objectivists assert the validity of knowledge of "objective" phenomena over that of "subjective" experience. The criticisms of objectivism (or, more narrowly, positivism)[26] developed by other writers will not be fully assayed here, but they derive directly from the controversies over the concept of ideology and may be briefly summarized as follows.

Empirical facts do not come to us unmediated; they are only meaningful when interpreted through theoretical concepts, and theories, which are human constructions, are intertwined with values. While a real world places limits on what we can reasonably interpret about what is "out there," there is a huge range of potential experience of that world, and which facts one attends to, how these are named or described, the interpretation of their significance, and what is accepted as convincing explanations of them are all inescapably theoretically mediated. In brief, facts must be interpreted or construed, not merely perceived, in order to be comprehended. The theoretical concepts through which facts are construed are at first acquired through socialization in a particular cultural milieu and incorporate its values, and then may later be elaborated and sometimes changed by an individual pursuing personal purposes, which again involves values. This type of critique has been explicitly applied to the practice of policy analysis, reinforcing the conclusion that an analyst cannot make sense of a policy issue without choosing among policy frames, each based on its own value-laden theory for interpreting social reality.[27] I agree with this assessment.

As an example of how facts and values are intertwined in social research, let's return to American political science. Objectivist researchers such as the behaviorists mentioned above have generally tried to present their work as an empirical, value-free enterprise. The most widely followed research agendas have been set by the concept of democracy, understood as the correspondence of policy decisions to the aggregated preferences of citizens; any goals and values which are democratically set are accepted by researchers as legitimate aims of public policy. By thus attempting to bracket the question of which values are to be preferred, political scientists have turned to empirical questions concerning how well actual political processes translate citizens' preferences into policy decisions (for example, the responsiveness of various political institutions to public opinion, voter behavior or interest group activity), and policy analysts have turned to empirical questions concerning how well policy

tools achieve given goals.[28] Actions and consequences, as part of the world of empirical facts, have been regarded as proper subjects of social science research, while goals and values have been considered to be outside the realm of scientific judgment.

Yet whether researchers are aware of it or not, the concept of democracy at the heart of these research agendas reflects the moral theory of utilitarianism and the values that it upholds. For utilitarians, maximizing the sum of individual satisfactions is the ethically correct aim of human behavior. Utilitarians highly value both the individual freedom to choose one's own satisfactions, and satisfying everyone's desires as fully as possible. Research agendas grounded in utilitarian values have likely been carried forward more because they have afforded interesting research topics than because the researchers are convinced that utilitarianism is the most rationally defensible moral theory available, although at one time probably many were so convinced, and some still may be. Although this is not the place to rehearse criticisms of utilitarianism, it should be pointed out that it is far from being universally accepted by moral philosophers.

In contending that any study of human behavior necessarily incorporates particular values,[29] this does not lead me to deny the possibility of intellectual progress on the grounds that all theoretical frames are equally valid or equally invalid. Essentially my position follows Mannheim's belief that we have grounds for preferring some frames over others. For one thing, I think there are empirical reasons to prefer one frame to another. One frame may do a better job of making sense of facts that a rival frame regards as problematic.

In the case of the political science research agendas mentioned above, the accumulation of empirical knowledge guided by this research paradigm has led some social scientists to critically reexamine its underlying assumptions.[30] For example, public opinion studies have demonstrated that, in general, most citizens' policy preferences are relatively uninformed and unstable.[31] Thus, it is quite plausible that political institutions create, shape, or manipulate preferences rather than simply respond to them. Furthermore, no actual political process aggregates preferences in any straightforward sense, except preferences concerning which political candidates should hold office. Ranking the multitude of political values or policy aims cannot be reduced to such a clear-cut decision. It may be a more accurate description of actual democratic processes to say that people charge their governmental representatives, not with aggregating individual preferences, but with discovering, forming, or promoting a collective preference. That

is, citizens do not assess government actions simply by the satisfaction of their individual preferences, but by the conformance of these actions with widely shared conceptions of social purposes and values.[32]

Facing such evidence, the utilitarian conception of democracy as the aggregation of individual citizens' preferences comes into focus as a problem, and an alternative conception of democracy (or some other guiding concept) becomes vital to the continuance of research. For example, democracy can be conceived as public deliberation aimed at practical agreements based on some rational conception of the common good. This is an alternative frame, based on different values, and it implies a whole different research agenda.[33] In fact, it underlies the research presented here, which was conceived of as a contribution towards such public deliberation in the area of poverty policy.

But in addition to empirical considerations, unlike both objectivists on the one side and postmodernist, Nietzschean relativists on the other, I do not regard value judgments as outside the realm of rational thinking. I believe that frames can be fruitfully compared with one another on both empirical *and* ethical grounds, and that this is a legitimate and important task for social scientists and other scholars. I will defend the rationality of value judgments after the following section, in which I begin to lay out my own views on the issues that I have been raising. I hope that the question I want to answer is by now clear, although it may sound paradoxical: through what frame should we (researchers) view the frames through which we (humans) view the social world?

5. Ethical Traditions

In broad terms the aim of my research, as indicated above, is to contribute to public deliberation towards practical agreement on policies reflecting a rational conception of the common good. My method is to identify and critically examine the contemporary use, in policy discourse, of what thus far have been called "ideologies" or "frames." This method builds on the work of those applying language theory to the concept of ideology, and I accept their general picture of the role of language in policy processes. But my orientation towards this phenomenon is not neutral; if the term "ideology" has unacceptable negative connotations, I find the current alternatives unacceptably non-evaluative. That is, they convey little about one's position on the key theoretical issues, particularly one's

attitude towards the value-dimension of frames (interpretive packages, belief systems, etc.). Therefore I have coined my own term, "ethical traditions," in order to highlight two aspects of my perspective which might otherwise be obscured. The first involves the human capacity for independent thinking, and the second involves the relation between reason and values.

First, the term "tradition" is meant to convey not only continuity over time in the use of a set of framing symbols, but that such continuity is due to the ongoing use of a shared cultural resource—in this case, language—and not to any presumed rigidities in the nature of thinking. I reject the idea that symbol systems persist because people have little control over the content of their minds—for example, that thinking has little or no independence from socioeconomic context and / or subconscious motivations. No doubt social context and subconscious motivations affect thinking to various degrees in different individuals, but I would argue that thinking can also be, and often is, a creative act which moves away from such limitations. Although the given symbols associated with a tradition do have limits to their intelligible usage, people can exercise some degree of creative freedom in adapting them to various purposes and circumstances. People vary not only in terms of cognitive sophistication and affective orientations towards ethical traditions, but also in terms of how rigid or flexible they are when they reproduce them. To put it plainly, people don't just learn and then express traditions in a mechanical fashion, sometimes they "play" with them in the process. This is true of the use of a language more generally; even though people are constrained by the words handed on to them, sometimes they make up new words or use old words in new ways. When a policy actor adapts an established ethical tradition to new circumstances and / or attaches it to a new policy idea, this is a creative act, and as such is one of the more unpredictable aspects of the policy process.

Clearly people in certain social environments are better situated to accomplish the creative adaptation of ethical traditions. People who are active in modern-day politics are exposed to multiple traditions, making them more conscious of their use, and they have incentives to rework them in ways that suit their needs and purposes.[34] This parallels Mannheim's argument about the social environment of intellectuals. He pointed out that intellectuals are exposed to multiple ideologies and have the time, training, and incentives to rework them into more comprehensive and coherent forms. Mannheim hoped that intellectuals would take

on the function of ideological comparison, synthesis, and refinement, and I am similarly proposing the examination of ethical traditions for a more conscious, coherent, and effective usage in guiding our social decisions. The term "political traditions" would also work, but I use the modifier "ethical" instead as a positive way of emphasizing the normative character of these traditions, the fact that they involve the question of what our moral aims as a society ought to be. Discussions of moral aims are viewed here as a normal, necessary, and desirable component of political discussions, whether conducted by scholars or anyone else, and not set in opposition to some allegedly value-free style of thought and discourse about politics.

In sum, my position on some of the key questions first raised by the concept of ideology is that scientific thinking can and should be relatively free from social conditioning, but not from values. It does not differ from ordinary thinking on either of these grounds (some "ordinary" people are very unconventional thinkers), but by ideally being more careful, self-conscious, logical and well informed (gathering and accounting for empirical evidence remains an important task). Critically examining the ethical traditions used in policy discussions, as well as being self-consciously critical of our larger theoretical orientations (which may be called "ethical traditions" within social science), are important tasks for social scientists and other scholars. But in these tasks, as for all humans thinking about our social life, facts and values are intertwined. This intertwining of facts and values need not threaten the idea of scientific progress, as this kind of "bias" is only a problem if there are no criteria for choosing among competing value-laden perspectives. For at the bottom of the desire to separate facts and values is the question of the rationality of different value priorities, and of the ethical theories which articulate them.

6. THE RATIONALITY OF ETHICS

The question of the rationality of ethics has been raised here in two distinct but related ways. One issue is that of the possibility of scientific progress if our theories are necessarily intertwined with values; this stems from the problem all researchers face of offering rational grounds for their choice among social theories to use in their research. The second is the issue more specific to my project, deriving from my version of ideology theory, which is that of evaluating the ethical traditions that are used in

the public discussion of a specific policy issue. The solution to the question of the rationality of ethics that will be proposed is relevant to both of these issues, but it will be extensively applied (in the rest of this book) only in my analysis of an ethical tradition used in poverty policy. To apply it to the defense of the larger theoretical framework guiding my analysis would be a book in itself, so here I have only been able to sketch out the direction my argument would take.[35]

The widespread skepticism in our society towards the rationality of ethics is historically rooted in the overthrow of natural law theory from a position of dominance in Western philosophy. Traditional natural law theorists held (and hold) that there are fundamental principles of right and wrong that apply to all human beings, are grounded in human nature and its proper ends, and are knowable through the exercise of human reason. The violent breakup of Christendom after the rise of Protestantism, the exploration of foreign cultures beyond Europe, and a growing awareness of social change over time eventually weakened the religious underpinnings and cast doubt on the universality of what was taken to be the natural moral order. The objectivist response to this situation was articulated by David Hume's is / ought distinction in which he argued that while empirical knowledge (knowledge of what is) is based on reason, morality (knowledge of what ought to be) is based on sentiments.[36]

Jeremy Bentham, the father of utilitarianism, was one of many people who tried to lay a new basis for a moral theory based on reason. He began with the foundational principle of maximizing human happiness: accepting that people have irrational preferences for some things over others, one should think rationally, that is, instrumentally, about how best to satisfy these preferences. Moral action, in this view, is that which produces the most aggregate satisfaction (utility) to humanity.[37] Modern science has been heir to the view that evaluative statements are the expression of nonrational individual preferences, and utilitarianism has had a wide influence in the social sciences, particularly economics.[38] I have already discussed the impact of utilitarianism on research agendas in political science.

Other moral theories starting with different foundational principles have competed with utilitarianism, notably theories of human rights and / or obligations such as that of Immanuel Kant, but the inconclusiveness of these debates led to even greater skepticism about the rationality of moral theorizing. The ultimate expression of such skepticism came from Nietzsche, who suggested that all ethical theories are expressions of a pre-rational will to

power. His postmodernist, anti-objectivist followers would "deconstruct" all statements about reality to exhibit the implicit values they uphold as well as the rational arbitrariness of those values, thus discrediting both scientific objectivity and moral absolutes together. Their ostensible purpose is to emancipate human beings from such intellectual constrictions, but to emancipate *for* what is a difficult question for them. In response, objectivists have redoubled their insistence on the separability of facts and values for fear of a descent into unreason. In my view, however, anxiety to protect the role of reason in human affairs from postmodernist attacks is unwarranted, as even deconstructionists go on reasoning about the world and the choices they face. The way forward, rather, is the reconstruction of rational moral discussion.

Alasdair MacIntyre is one of those pursuing this answer to the modern intellectual dilemma.[39] He has argued that the multiple views of justice prevalent in our society (based variously, for example, on utility, or dessert, or inalienable rights), and the different conceptions of practical rationality connected to these views (the costs and benefits of consequences, impartiality, achieving an ultimate good), are cultural fragments which we have inherited, the remnants of more coherent philosophical traditions from earlier cultures. Older traditions such as versions of Aristoteleanism and Augustinianism were abandoned by many intellectuals at the time of the Enlightenment for the project of rebuilding moral theory upon first principles undeniable to any rational person. It was the historical failure to establish such self-evident first principles (as attempted in both utilitarianism and Kantian theory) that sealed the loss of faith in rational argumentation about ethics.

But according to MacIntyre, if you reject the false expectations of this Enlightenment project you can avoid the disillusionment that leads to ethical irrationalism. MacIntyre proposed a conception of rational inquiry as embodied in traditions. In this conception, standards of rational justification are not based on self-evident first principles. They emerge from and are part of a history in which they are vindicated (or fail to be vindicated) by the way in which they transcend the limitations of and provide remedies for the defects of their predecessors within that same history. Enlightenment rationalism as an approach to moral theory was itself born this way, offering a standard of justification meant to overcome the problems associated with the earlier natural law traditions. MacIntyre argues that this Enlightenment project has failed to vindicate itself.

Instead of continuing to pursue the project of justification by self-evident first principles, he would have justification take the form of a

narrative of the historical course of the development of a tradition. First principles are not justified independently, but as part of the rational superiority of a whole theoretical structure over all previous attempts within that tradition to formulate such principles. To be rational means to participate in and identify with the history culminating in the construction of a particular theoretical structure. It is only in relation to a competing theory or set of theories that a theory can be justified. The success or failure of the whole theory in meeting objections from within or without the tradition is what vindicates or fails to vindicate the first principles.

Building on Mannheim's approach to evaluating ideologies, MacIntyre has proposed the use of an historical argument to understand, compare, and evaluate moral traditions. His method offers the hope of progress in rational moral theory. I have modeled my own research along these lines, replacing MacIntyre's focus on intellectual history with a focus on the history of public discourse within a particular policy area. (I have also modeled this theoretical chapter along these lines, using an historical argument to justify my theoretical approach.)

To fully assess the relative superiority of the ethical traditions associated with poverty policy, I would have to compare them against one another (in particular, modern liberalism versus civic republicanism) in terms of such criteria as their comprehensiveness (in organizing the facts and values claimed by various parties to be relevant to the issue), coherence (of the internal logic of the tradition and in its appropriateness to the situation), and consensus (the ability to generate a course of action to which people will agree, thus satisfying our proximate aim of cooperative social action). But as I have come to believe that a version of civic republicanism has dominated this policy area, I have chosen for this study the more manageable task of examining how well this particular tradition maintained coherence while adapting to the challenges of changing social conditions. In the concluding chapter I will stand within the republican tradition and make some policy suggestions intended to overcome its problems of coherency.

7. Conclusion

Before turning to my research, it may be helpful to conclude this chapter by comparing my approach to those of others who are attempting

to move beyond the critique of objectivist conceptions of policy analysis and create new theories and methods. All of these efforts are in their early stages, but two of the most advanced that I am aware of are those of Martin Rein and Frank Fischer.

Rein examined the different ways analysts might relate to policy frames, and proposed a "value-critical" policy analysis which would ferret out the frames underlying public policies as a prelude to frame criticism, frame building, and frame integration.[40] My theoretical views grew out of reflection on Rein's, but my method is different. In his early work he explored puzzles in the relation between policy design and policy practice, and more recently he and his collaborator Donald Schön have conducted empirical studies of cases of frame conflict to determine conditions which facilitate the successful reframing of policy issues.[41] I have focused on the language of policy debates, and use history to create critical distance from the frames revealed in this language.[42] By examining the use of an ethical tradition over time and changing conditions, I can then apply an evaluative criteria concerning the "fit" of the tradition to modern circumstances.

Fischer has developed a schematic of four "discursive phases" in the discussion of policy issues, in which emphasis from phase to phase shifts from empirical to normative issues. He thus admits a variety of methods as appropriate to different phases of inquiry.[43] I am very sympathetic to his effort to divide up the logic of inquiry into different phases this way, each with its own characteristic methods. My research here fits his description of the "situational validation" phase of policy discourse: an inquiry into the fit between a normative framework and a particular situation regarded as a social problem. Fischer does not prescribe a particular method for this phase of inquiry, but indicates that it is most compatible with the "interpretive" schools of social science such as social phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, and ethnomethodology.[44] He is explicit that his overall aim is an "emancipatory" social science that would aid policy actors in understanding, and presumably gaining control over, the ways they make and remake their social world.[45] I am in concurrence with this emancipatory aim, but would go further to say that we are to be emancipated from uncritical adherence to ethical traditions in order to then commit ourselves to our critically arrived at best understanding of ethical social aims and actions. To "deliberate" (de-liberate) literally means to move the will from freedom to a conscious commitment to a particular course of action.

As one step, then, in this process of emancipation and deliberation, the chapters that follow describe the long use of a particular ethical tradition which has played an important role in promoting several different policy ideas in the United States. It is the story of civic republicanism as it was adapted to nineteenth-century public land policies and from there to various usages in twentieth-century poverty policy. The central symbols of this tradition are the words "dependence" and "independence," symbols with important intellectual and emotional associations that take us back to the very birth of this nation.