INTRODUCTION

Public Policy and the Social Construction of Deservedness

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Since time immemorial, human societies have constructed differences between people like themselves and the unfamiliar "others," who often are viewed with distrust, dislike, and even hatred. Primitive tribes all over the world have considered themselves people chosen by God(s), while others are not so privileged and, perhaps, are not really human beings. In First American languages, a number of indigenous peoples before the European conquest chose names for themselves meaning *the people,* implying that others were less than people. Similarly, although the roles were reversed, missionaries who accompanied the conquistadors in their mastery of the New World debated whether or not the Indians had souls.

A fundamental notion of the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution is that all *citizens* are equal, albeit with citizenship closely circumscribed. Nevertheless, the notion of privileged classes was viewed with disdain, an outmoded custom of Great Britain and Continental Europe that the new nation forever intended to reject. America would have no aristocracy, no nobility, and no ruling class. There would be no standing army, with associated ranks affording civilian or military privileges, and there would be no overbearing bureaucracy, with officials trained for lifelong public service with public salaries. Viewed from a contemporary vantage point, the first constitution fell far short of its radically democratic ideals in that it restricted voting to white, male property owners, tolerated the inhumanity of human slavery, and engraved into law the idea that persons of African descent were to be counted as three-fifths of a white person.

In spite of the many shortcomings of the early constitution, the principle of equality remained deeply ingrained in the American consciousness. Great progress was made in the nineteenth century in ending slavery, providing equal protection of the law as a constitutional right, and granting equal opportunity to some of the previously disadvantaged persons through policies such as the

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Homestead Act, free public education, the system of land grant colleges and universities, and recognition of the right of labor to organize and strike. In the twentieth century legal barriers to voting for women were removed, the franchise extended to the eighteen- to twenty-one-year-old age group, citizenship status was awarded to Native Americans, and equal protection of the law extended to more people in more contexts. Yet, democracy in the United States scarcely can be considered a finished project. Public policy—and the laws that policy produces—are the principal tools in securing the democratic promise for all people. Public policy is able to insure that all people—not just the select few—are considered deserving and entitled. Yet, policy also has been the primary means of legitimating, extending, and even creating distinctive populations—some of whom are extolled as deserving and entitled and others who are demonized as undeserving and ineligible. These groups have been treated very differently in the governance process.

The purpose of this book is to explain, examine, and criticize the social construction of deservedness and entitlement in public policy. The editors and authors contend that in the governance process, groups are identified and constructed as deserving and undeserving. These constructions (whether or not they already are part of popular culture) gain legitimacy. Differences become amplified and, perhaps, institutionalized into permanent lines of social, economic, and political cleavage. Unless challenged by social movements and countervailing public policies, social constructions of deservedness and entitlement result in an "other"—an underclass of marginalized and disadvantaged people who are widely viewed as undeserving and incapable. Marginalized people become alienated from the society as well as from one another. Often, they are unable to recognize their legitimate political interests or take political action that would protect their interests. In the remainder of this Introduction we will provide the groundwork for understanding how social constructions of deservedness came to play such an important part in the governance process.

Social Constructions of Group Deservedness

While they may differ as to the reasons, observers of human behavior agree that "there is a fundamental human desire to view one's own group as positive and occupying higher social status than other relevant groups" (Monroe, Hanking, and Van Vechten 2000). This may be the result of genetics that favor loyalty to the kinship group or perhaps because authoritarian family structures produce personalities predisposed to this type of separation. Some evolutionary theories contend that competition for survival results in individuals cooperating among themselves against common enemies. Still others believe that a bias toward in-group superiority is simply rational behavior in the face of natural resources scarcities.

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Regardless of the reason, many different sociological, psychological, and biological theories acknowledge a process called *maximizing the difference* through which people attempt to distinguish their group from others, whether or not there is personal gain (Tajfel 1970). People strongly identify with their own group and exaggerate positive traits, especially at the expense of the lesser-regarded others. Groups and societies create myths and rationales that justify the dominance of some groups over others. Such stories and myths undergird beliefs that differences are fundamental, natural, and beyond human invention or social convention. Race, ethnicity, and gender are particularly good examples of socially constructed differences, greatly magnified and encrusted with mythology and custom. Whatever differences in genetic and biological endowments that exist among these groups are exceedingly small and by no means support the vast differences in social roles and treatment.

By asserting that group traits are socially constructed, we do not suggest that no real differences exist between groups and that factual distinctions are somehow made up. Almost always there are real distinctions, as in differences in skin color. Yet, neutral observation of facts, especially the very small variations in skin coloring that separate races, would suggest no factual basis for the very large differences in social constructions of deservedness, trustworthiness, honesty, and proclivity toward criminality that distinguish popular racist constructions. The facts of group characteristics may be real, but the evaluative component that makes them positive or negative is the product of social and political processes.

Group Deservedness and Governance

From the beginning, the United States espoused a system of limited government in which a great deal of power remained with individual citizens and, when ceded to governments, resided primarily in states and localities rather than the federal government. The gradual accretion of national power was the consequence of events, economic changes and, importantly for our argument, federal actions to cement the allegiance of important constituencies or groups to the nation.

Governments want to bind powerful groups to the state by providing a stake or permanent entitlements to those whose support is most needed (Skocpol 1992). Thus, governments have exploited peoples' tendency toward group categorization, positive group identification, and willingness to accept negative perceptions of undeserving groups. Entitlements, provided to those whose support is most needed and who are most easy to justify as deserving, need not be equitably distributed to serve the state-building function. As Laura Jensen argues in the first chapter, early American entitlements to Revolutionary War veterans constitute an example of social construction of deservedness

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through governance. As she notes, the Continental Army was recruited and maintained through the long years of war through promises of entitlements to soldiers whose stay in service until the end of enlistment was critical to victory. After the war, the Continental Congress was strapped for funds and reneged on many of its promises. Ultimately, as Jensen explains, justifications were marshaled to separate the most deserving veterans from the less deserving, and pensions were afforded to some, but not all, veterans and certainly to only a small portion of those suffering from the ravages of war. Such special treatment was justified by the social construction of deservedness, which magnified small differences in the characteristics and experiences of revolutionary soldiers and made those differences the basis of vast variability in their treatment by the government.

Of course, in designating categories of deservedness, government exploited values deeply held and widely shared among citizens. The liberal bias in favor of property holders was variously exploited in the nation-building enterprise. As already noted, voting eligibility was originally restricted to men with property. The inability to manage property, except under guardianship, was considered a basis for voter disqualification (see chapter 2). The virtue of the "yeoman farmer" who owned his own land was extolled by Thomas Jefferson—who used the argument of lands for the landless as a rationale for the Louisiana Purchase, a prime example of an exercise in state-building. The American West was settled by persons mainly of European descent through the Homestead Act, which gave tracts of land to those who could prove themselves deserving simply by their willingness to live on and work the land. Other settlement policies provided land to railroads, schools, and some "others" who were constructed as essential to establishing civilization and democracy. In providing these lands to those deemed deserving, Congress reinforced the values of land ownership and the strength of railroad companies. These initial entitlements were permanent and have been expanded throughout U.S. history as the federal government has been pressured to provide crop price supports, crop retirement programs, funding to purchase and store crop surpluses, and infrastructure support for irrigation projects on lands that many would argue ought never to have been farmed.

Property ownership and good citizenship are closely associated in American governance. Not only has the government awarded property to help create the kinds of citizens it wants, it has withheld property from those constructed as undesirable. As Stephanie DiAlto (this volume) explains in chapter 3, Asians were prohibited from holding land in California in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Native Americans were stripped of much of their homelands and, when reservations were created for them, individual property ownership—the hallmark of the being a "real American"—was long withheld. While foreigners are allowed to own property within the United States, this too has been contested when foreign groups are viewed as a threat.

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In the early 1990s, there was great concern that Japanese groups had too much property, especially on the West Coast, and laws were introduced to restrict their access to real estate markets (see chapter 3).

With urbanization and industrialization, land ownership (if not property ownership) might have faded from the popular image of what is required to be truly American were it not for the positive reinforcement of public policy, which provided new categories of the deserving. The Federal Home Loan Banking System supported Savings and Loan Associations throughout America to provide home loans within neighborhoods. Besides rescuing many homeowners in default during the Depression, the federal government also provided federally insured low-interest loans to home buyers and subsidized interest rates on home loans for veterans of World War II. The social construction of the homeowner is positive and well entrenched through policies regulating public and private banking and real estate institutions. Politically, it is virtually impossible to remove the income tax deduction for home mortgages, even though home purchases have become more of a financial investment than a commitment to citizenship within stable neighborhoods, as it was originally intended.

Public policy is the primary tool through which government acts to exploit, inscribe, entrench, institutionalize, perpetuate, or change social constructions. It is fair to observe that there are many different sources of social constructions besides policy and that, overall, policies are not the most important tools constructing groups (Lieberman 1995; Schneider and Ingram 1995). The role of governance in social construction probably is smaller than the combined influence of market advertisements, music, film, and other aspects of historical custom and popular culture. Yet, policy is the dynamic element through which governments anchor, legitimize, or change social constructions. It is the means used by government to powerfully support or undercut widespread practices of social separation, such as racial segregation in schools and housing. It is also the tool through which government can raise up previously disadvantaged groups, as it has done with the aged through the Social Security system and the disabled through the *Americans with Disabilities Act*. Alternatively, it can create categories—such as drunk drivers—which without the force of law would not have existed or at least would not have borne any real stigma.

Persistence in Social Constructions

Some social constructions seldom, if ever, change and are accepted as the natural order of things. Surely the sanctity of property and the positive construction of property owners fits in this category. "Idiots," the "mentally retarded" or, in contemporary parlance, the "intellectually challenged" were long imprisoned either in their own homes or with debtors and criminals. Schriner (see chapter 2) describes how "idiots" were lumped together with the "insane" and

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sometimes with "criminals" in the wording of state constitutions, with all three groups negatively constructed as unfit for the right to vote. While they are objects of pity and sympathy, at least in childhood, "village idiots" have essentially the same status today that they had in the Middle Ages. There are enormous differences in the degree of mental retardation, and some otherwise "incompetent" minds are capable of beautiful art and incredible acts of generosity and love; yet, the mentally disabled tend to be lumped together as a group. Adult persons of low intelligence are often viewed as dangerous, and it has proven very difficult to secure special rights for these negatively constructed groups. Generally, it has required courts to intervene to protect the retarded from the death penalty when it is not at all clear that these individuals comprehended the full meaning of their acts. Even under these circumstances, courts more often than not are unsupportive. Although it would seem reasonable that the parents of retarded children might have both the incentive and the political power to mobilize for change, the stigma of having a retarded family member remains strong. Consider the widespread practice of prenatal screening, a technological advance fueled by the desire to abort fetuses that are at high risk of retardation. Clearly, there are exceptions—such as the Kennedy family, which has advocated for including the mentally retarded with other more positively constructed disabled groups. Yet, the negative social construction is persistently predominant. Even though it ought not to be a crime or even a stigma to be "stupid" or "dumb," it has certainly been treated as such. Additionally, contemporary parents who give birth to retarded children are quietly stigmatized as genetically deficient or careless.

The persistently negative social construction of African Americans is a well-recognized, lingering injustice in America. A century and a half after the abolition of slavery, African Americans still are more likely than other groups to be perceived as lazy and more apt than others to engage in crime. The persistently negative social construction of African-American women as Jezebels and welfare queens is very strong and has, arguably, been reinforced by policy and social science analysis (see chapters 9–11). Entitlements have been difficult to either grant or sustain for African-American welfare recipients who are negatively constructed. As Mara Sidney argues in chapter 4, it was necessary to separate some blacks from other African Americans and to construct them more positively, as the "New Black Middle Class," in order for them to become legally entitled to enter the housing market on the same terms as whites.

Path dependency theory sheds some light upon the persistence of social constructions (Pierson 2000a). Once a course has been set in a positive or negative direction in relation to the construction of some group or idea, the difficulties of change accumulate over time. As Paul Pierson observes:

> Policies, grounded in law, and backed by the coercive power of the state, signal to actors what has to be done and what cannot be done, and they estab-

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> lish many rewards and penalties associated with particular activities. Most policies are remarkably durable. Especially in modern societies, extensive policy arrangements fundamentally shape the incentives and resources of political actors. (2000a, 259)

The ways by which public policy can set a path-dependent direction in motion and protect it from change are nicely illustrated by the national parks and forests systems. The product of the conservation movement during the Theodore Roosevelt Administration, public land ownership might well have been defeated or reversed under the more conservative Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover administrations. We have already observed that the positive social construction of private property ownership is more American than apple pie. In addition, the nation had a long tradition of giving land away rather than managing public lands itself. Yet, with the passage of laws by Congress, the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service came into being with very strong, positive images as defenders of nature. Smokey the Bear and Ranger Rick came to be heroes immediately recognizable by any American child. The early creation of the great National Parks, like Yellowstone and Yosemite, fed into a construction of the American West as a playground for millions of urban Easterners. Concessionaires at National Parks and the lumber and grazing interests that profited from multiple-use National Forests were strong forces against privatization, but the stronger impediment was symbolic and emotional. The Grand Canyon, and its Park Service protectors, came to rival the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island in terms of representing true American values. Institutions such as the federal management agencies and their constituencies—including conservation and resource extraction interest groups—worked in tandem with positive social constructions of these places to perpetuate the national forests and parks and to rebuff any serious challenge.

Policy persistence is more common than policy change. Shifts in party control of the executive or legislative branches of government and changes in court justices alter access to and distribution of power among interests. Nevertheless, the strengths of governing institutions and interest groups and the power of discourse have legitimized existing policy work and protected it from sudden or dramatic change (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). A kind of punctuated equilibrium exists in many policy areas whereby long periods of policy stability are interrupted by a short burst of innovation which, in turn, becomes entrenched into another long-lasting regime (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). Change is also resisted by policy networks—constellations of elected officials, agency representatives, interest groups, scientists, and policy analysts—which share the core beliefs that undergird the policy philosophy (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993). The core beliefs of policy networks often are grounded as much in ideology as in science, and sometimes are impervious to unsettling influences like new scientific evidence. The stability of long-term

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social constructions of deservedness and entitlement are among the policy ideas that cause inertia in policy change.

A key factor contributing to persistent social constructions of deservedness and entitlement is that not only do the deserving and entitled get stronger over time (as they are institutionally reinforced), but also the undeserving and unentitled may unwittingly collude with the powerful and positively constructed to perpetuate their own subordination. As Gaventa (1980) has argued, the powerless may be deprived of even the capacity to know their own interest. They sometimes come to identify with their oppressors in that they believe the maldistribution of resources is simply the way things are or that the entitled are truly more deserving than themselves. The deserving too often build positive identity by exaggerating their own worthiness and amplifying the differences between themselves and others.

Overcoming negative identity is difficult and often unsuccessful because of actions that may make sense to individuals but harm the collective cause. In some instances, individuals within a negatively constructed group will leave the group if they can or hide their membership, as many gays and lesbians did for years. Instead of building on the virtues and strengths of the group as worthy people, they abandon the group or hide, thereby failing to challenge the dominant perspectives. In other instances, members of negatively constructed groups may actually agree with the unfavorable characterizations assigned to them, but distinguish themselves by parsing the construction so that "others" in the group actually are undeserving, but they, personally, are different (see chapter 11). Some of these strategies allow dominant groups to continue to believe that the less advantaged are responsible for their own plight. Negatively constructed groups, however, sometimes are able to convert negative identities to positive identities, to mobilize, and to participate in changing their own social construction—a topic we will explore.

Policy Change and Changes in Social Constructions

Reputations for deservedness are not always permanent, and entitlements do change. Circumstances may change, thereby discrediting previous ways of thinking about issues. Many social constructions are contestable, so that one or another perspective can become dominant. Some groups exist without any noticeable social construction until events or entrepreneurs recognize political opportunities and create positive or negative constructions of them. Public policies and social constructions of groups interact in a reciprocal manner so that they mutually affect each other. A changed social construction of deservedness can precipitate change in policy and, alternatively, public policy change can alter constructions.

External events may create opportunities for new constructions, which subsequently lead to policy change that inscribes the changed construction and

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lends it legitimacy. Prior to September 11, 2001, Arab Americans and the religion of Islam did not have a widespread dominant construction in the United States. In contrast with many other minority groups, persons of Arabic descent (or those who practice the Islamic religion) were not granted "protected minority" status and were, with some exceptions, overt examples of discrimination were far less common. (Exceptions include the "Owned by Americans" signs throughout the United States, indicating motels that are not owned by Arabs.) The suicide hijacking of four commercial jet airliners and the subsequent attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon that killed 2,800 people brought about a dramatic change. "Islamic," "Arab," or "Middle Eastern" became common prefixes to "terrorist." Persons who "looked" Arabic were removed from airplanes, even though they had legitimate tickets and had done nothing to warrant their removal. Racial profiling took on an entirely new meaning as hundreds of persons from Middle Eastern countries or of Arabic descent were questioned and were required to register with the federal government if they were not citizens. Many were incarcerated on suspicion of minor violations of immigration policy. The negative construction of Arab Americans expanded to greatly damage the construction of all immigrants, who subsequently were denied employment in airline terminals without any evidence that they had been or might be involved in sabotage. Policy proposals that would have granted legal status to thousands of Mexican Americans who have lived in the United States for many years were suddenly postponed as unthinkable. These events occurred even though no one suggested that Mexican Americans had any greater likelihood of involvement in terrorism than "homegrown" terrorists such as Timothy McVeigh.

Events also may bring about significant changes in existing constructions. Prior to 1983, the social construction of persons with AIDS was as undeserving. Gay men, who were believed to be the only carriers of the disease, were viewed as the cause of their own problems through their own risky behavior and lifestyles. After AIDS was found to occur in babies, women, and individuals who had received transfusions of infected blood, the group began to be constructed more positively. The story of Ryan White, a thirteen-year-old schoolboy in Indiana who was banned from his classroom, added a civil rights dimension to the story that helped transform public opinion and resulted in more positive media coverage. The identification of admired sports figures—like Arthur Ashe and Magic Johnson—with the disease also contributed to revising the prevailing social construction. Movies like *Philadelphia* portrayed gay men more positively than before, and the cohesion and bravery of gays themselves in face of the health threat did much to reconstruct their image.

In response to the changing image of persons with AIDS, federal, state, and local governments extended greater entitlements, including greater access to social services and job protection (Schneider and Ingram 1997). Among the effects, however, was a differentiation among the more deserving and less

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deserving types of persons with AIDS, as reflected in the funding allocation patterns mandated by the *Ryan White Act of 1990* (Donovan 1994). Moreover, the most affective policy tool in preventing the spread of AIDS among drug users—needle exchange programs for intravenous users—was repeatedly rejected because of the undeserving construction of these people (Donovan 1994).

Social movements have become a powerful force for social change. History has shown repeatedly that even the powerless have power when they are able to come together and resist dominant constructions, oppose oppressive policies, mobilize, and associate themselves with widespread fundamental values of fairness and justice. All of the great social movements of the twentieth century produced fundamental, long-lasting policy changes. The women's movement first produced the right to vote, and though the equal rights amendment failed by the smallest of margins, women's rights have been continually expanding in the United States as a result of inclusion in the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*. The social movements of African Americans produced impressive gains, as did the peace movement (that eventually helped end the Vietnam War), the environmental movement, the gay and lesbian movement, and numerous others actions within state and local politics.

Contested social constructions are inherently unstable and are ripe for policy change that subdivides populations into more deserving and less deserving categories. Lina Newton (chapter 5) shows that Mexican-American immigrants are commonly constructed both positively and negatively. They are seen as natural residents of the American Southwest, which was ruled by Spain and Mexico for more than four centuries. They are also recognized as hardworking, brave, and ambitious—willing to suffer the deprivations of dangerous, illegal border crossings to get to this country and then accept low wages and undesirable jobs that nonetheless are a means to get ahead and support a family. Alternatively, they can also be constructed quite negatively as illegal aliens, since there are millions of undocumented Mexicans living in this country. They can also be constructed as unentitled freeloaders on the grounds that they "wrongfully" receive welfare, health, and education benefits while not paying taxes—even though they all pay sales taxes and, in some cases, property taxes. Political entrepreneurs like Governor Pete Wilson of California were able to capitalize on the negative side of the contested construction of Mexican Americans in backing ballot propositions such as Proposition 187 in California that prohibited Mexican immigrants from receiving a wide range of state and local benefits, including education for their children. As Newton (chapter 5) asserts, the backlash against immigrants extended to the elimination of federal payments for immigrant health care of undocumented persons.

The immigrant examples illustrate that entrepreneurship is another important force for change in policy and change in social constructions of deservedness. Economic, political, social, and moral entrepreneurs have the ability to tap into the language and interests of diverse groups to create a common frame of

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reference, or a unifying social construction or vision, that bridges previous differences. Entrepreneurs facilitate "consensus formation," or a convergence of meaning in social networks and subcultures (Tarrow 1998, 21). Thus, groups that may have thought they had nothing in common find themselves working together. Mintrom (2000) argues that such entrepreneurs have been able to marshall the discontent of various groups about public schools and to offer charter schools as an alternative to alleviate many problems that previously were viewed as disconnected. Part of the unifying vision was a negative construction that public school bureaucracy is more interested in teacher and administrator entitlements than in educating children. Another important negative social construction was that immigrant pupils who did not speak English would be unable to perform up to any reasonable standard. Public policy facilitates entrepreneurship by creating opportunities that invite entrepreneurs to exercise their talents. It might be argued that busing and immigration policies created conditions in public schools which led to widespread discontent among white parents, who became receptive to entrepreneurs with new visions and alternatives that struck a responsive chord.

While entrepreneurship can be a very positive force in American politics in that it facilitates policy change, some entrepreneurship builds upon and amplifies the xenophobic and racist sentiments that continue to be undesirable undercurrents in the imperfect U.S. democracy. A number of the chapters in this volume (see particularly chapters 3, 5, and 9) illustrate how political capital is made by exploiting racist divisions and amplifying differences along racial fault lines. In our previous work we have termed this *degenerative politics,* which is characterized by its exploitation of derogatory social constructions, manipulation of symbols or logic, and deceptive communication that masks the true purpose of policy. We are concerned that degenerative politics has become more common as other means for solidifying public support become increasingly scarce. Governments that face severe budget constraints are less able to attract and bind people to a common understanding of the public interest through the provision of costly public services and entitlements. Therefore, the capacity to include almost everyone as part of "deserving" constituencies does not occur so regularly when budgets are tightly constrained. Moreover, the erosion of allegiance to political parties among the populace means that coalitions that support policies must be built one individual policy at a time, rather than depending on a large base of partisan support that continues across many issues. This affects the ability of parties to hold their core constituency together. In the absence of a partisan base built on positive constructions and the allocation of policy benefits, scapegoating is an easy alternative way to gain allegiance from the party constituency and to distinguish itself from other parties. Increasingly, campaigns focus on "negative campaigning" in which party entrepreneurs find subgroups that can be blamed for prevailing problems. Rather than focusing on the systematic biases within our economic and social system—which constitute

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the best explanations for the very different rates of economic, social, and political success—the victims are blamed for their own problems (see Schram, chapter 10; Ingram and Schneider 1991).

Constructing groups as undeserving and then inflicting punishment on them as a means of gaining political advantage is most evident in criminal justice policy. Sean Nicholson-Crotty and Kenneth Meier (chapter 8) demonstrate the construction of a "dangerous class" responsible for violence, insecurity, and the corruption of youth. This kind of extremely negative construction under certain circumstances can lead to draconian policies aimed against deviant targets. Moral entrepreneurs are most likely to emerge and succeed when the deviant group is readily identifiable to both the mass public and political elites and is portrayed as "out of control." All too often in America the "dangerous class" has been strongly associated with negative racial stereotyping as Chinese Americans were in the 1909 law banning the smoking of opium, and African Americans in the 1984 *Comprehensive Crime Control Act.* While the existence of a "dangerous class" is often associated with the culture and lifestyles of whole racial and ethnic groups, punishment is leveled against individuals who are held responsible for their own acts.

The ability of entrepreneurs to exploit the undeserving "other" is exacerbated by the highly individualistic culture in the United States and the belief of many American citizens in the absolute power of individual agency. Consequently, the causes of underweight and unhealthy babies at birth are traced to mothers who smoke or drink, not to the unavailability of prenatal care—which might have monitored and regulated pregnant women's behavior through medical advice and treated other causes of fetal health problems. The high arrest rate of black men is explained by black culture, not by racial profiling, joblessness, loitering, vagrancy, or gang laws that unfairly target gatherings of men of color. Sandford Schram (chapter 10) maintains that analysts too often overlook or mask the racial composition of welfare populations for fear that minority groups will be blamed for their own poverty, but that this is a mistake. It is better, he maintains, to recognize the overrepresentation of blacks in the welfare system and then to explore the root causes.

Policy has the capacity to create opportunities for change in social constructions, and it is possible for leaders to successfully advocate on behalf of disadvantaged populations that can be portrayed as powerless as well as not dangerous. Entrepreneurs have created advocacy groups on behalf of the physically disabled and others, using arguments that not all individuals begin from the level playing field assumed by those who believe that failure mainly is the fault of the individual. Not all persons begin with the same educational, income, cultural, racial, or gender advantages as others.

Sometimes policy helps overcome divisive social constructions by combining groups into a single target population when passing out entitlements (or punishments), thereby mixing persons who previously might have been divided

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into more privileged and less privileged groups. Also, policy may subdivide an existing group into classes of more deserving or less deserving and this, too, contributes to changes in the social constructions within what previously might have been a more homogenous group. As Mara Sidney concludes (chapter 4), the efforts of a Democratic-controlled Congress to eliminate housing discrimination in the 1960s—discrimination that had long been practiced against African Americans—met with considerable resistance. Much of the opposition was justified on the grounds that people who participated in the urban riots of the 1960s should not be rewarded for their unlawful and unruly behavior. This resistance was overcome by a policy strategy that subdivided African Americans into middle-class blacks, who had earned a right to escape from the ghetto, and the poor urban underclass of (implied) urban rioters, who were stuck in inner cities. The consequence for more positive social constructions of some but not all African Americans, therefore, was mixed. The African Americans who were most economically advantaged and, presumably, best able to organize were to be treated as if they were white. This construction leaves poorer, inner city residents without benefits and without the leadership that middle class blacks might have provided.

Policy is often its own cause, in the sense that feedback from previous policies can create the structural opportunities for social mobilization and change of social constructions (Wildavsky 1987). As Laura Jensen explains in chapter 1, when the policy and rationale that afforded pensions to soldiers and officers of the Revolutionary War became widely accepted, it was impossible not to extend the benefits to all veterans regardless of their economic status. The line between deserving and undeserving veterans was simply too difficult to maintain once veterans realized that some veterans, not including themselves, were receiving federal aid.

Public policies can be shaped in ways that encourage or impede feedback, and this, in turn, impacts the likelihood that social mobilization will occur to demand policy change. Information feedback, openness, and transparency favor mobilization. Secrecy has the opposite effect. Consider the tax codes, for example, that grant tax exemptions to various interest groups at the local, state, and national levels. Tax exemptions often occur without drawing attention, objection, or counter-mobilization because of the opaqueness and Byzantine complexity of the tax code (Smith and Ingram 2002). Only individuals who are able to hire tax accountants, lawyers as watchdogs, and lobbyists have an opportunity to challenge tax breaks. Tax exemptions have the same effects on the budget as do direct payments—like welfare checks—but the latter are much more likely to be noticed and to prompt political reaction.

Policy feedback is especially likely to prompt mobilization when it negatively affects well regarded and more powerful individuals. Opposition to the Vietnam War, for example, gained considerable attention—but made almost no policy progress—when it was concentrated among college students who were able to use their student status to gain draft exemptions. The opposition was

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easily constructed as scraggly, long-haired radicals with communist leanings. The change in the draft policy, so that student exemptions were eliminated in favor of a lottery that applied to all young men in relevant age groups who met physical requirements, provided an opportunity for a changed social construction. Opposition gained enormous ground and much greater respectability when all male college students, knowledgeable and vocal themselves and the sons of middle-income and upper-income parents, received their lottery numbers and knew that a draft notice was close behind.

The architecture of policy is important in understanding mobilization, as David Meyer explains in his analysis of draft policy:

> The nature of American draft policy gave antiwar organizations a vehicle for servicing their constituents: draft counseling. It also forced young men to confront the policy concretely as well as abstractly, making personal decisions about their own draft status and strategies (e.g., whether or not to pursue "conscientious objector" status). Both opposition to the draft in general, and concern about one's individual fate, pushed young men—and those who cared about them—into the full range of American political institutions including Selective Service bureaucracy, local draft boards, the courts, and electoral campaigns. (2002, 6)

The process set in motion by the draft policy had another, perhaps more profound effect. At the time, the policy allowed participants in protests to escape the stigma of being draft dodgers and unpatriotic. Through draft counseling, teach-ins, and protests, resisting an unjust war became a just cause. The ability of draft resisters to find a positive identity grounded in a moral cause was fundamental to mobilization. This is a type of effect that policy has on identity, which is central to social mobilization. We will address this concept further in this introduction.

Some negative social constructions are so uncontested and so accepted that mobilization does not occur even when policy would seem to offer an opportunity. While state constitutional debates over the franchise appeared to offer a platform to contest the disenfranchisement of persons designated as "idiots" and "insane," there was no real objection to their disqualification (chapter 2). Today there still are virtually no advocacy groups working to gain the right to vote for several groups who clearly have political interests that should be represented and who are capable of participating. This includes many of the "insane," some of the developmentally disabled, and persons convicted of felonies.

Even though, as we have noted, it is possible for negatively constructed groups to mobilize for social and policy change, the costs may be very high. Gays, lesbians, bisexual, and transgendered (GLBT) people have struggled to find effective strategies, just as African Americans, women, and other social movements have done. As Bernstein (1997) has pointed out, effective strategies depend on the context. Some gays and lesbians, for example, may choose to work quietly with legislative and administrative groups—largely behind the scenes—to argue that

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they deserve the same rights and protections as others under the constitutional guarantee of equal protection of the law. This signals that GLBTs are not different than other people. A "soft" strategy such as this may be effective in bringing about policy inclusion and, perhaps, in the long run—through association of gays and lesbians with all other people in terms of political rights—break down the perceptions that only certain kinds of sexuality are normal. On the other hand, as Bernstein argues, GLBTs may be disappointed in policy as an engine of change because strategies that focus on changing policy may not directly challenge prevailing values that afford privilege to heterosexuals. Other strategies that convert the negative identity associated with GLBTs into a positive identity through direct challenges to dominant values may be more effective. Some GLBT groups prefer explicit and vivid portrayals of homosexuality, bisexuality, and transgendered behavior, such as gay pride events and gay rights parades. Portrayals that some people describe as "flaunting" homosexuality are embraced by those attempting fundamental change in values and social constructions.

Another impetus for change can be found in science and technology advances. Scientific evidence of the biological basis of different forms of sexuality provides a rationale for arguing that no one type of sexual orientation has a special claim on normalcy and, therefore, no one type of sexuality should be more privileged than another. The implications for policy may seem promising, although some observers have argued that this line of reasoning is a slippery slope and is unlikely to deliver on the promise of equal rights for lesbians and gays (Brookey 2001).

Developments in weaponry that permit individuals with brainpower and other skills unrelated to physical strength to excel has contributed to the inclusion of women in the military, including participation among the fighting forces from which most promotions emerge. The social construction of the membership of fighting forces gradually is changing from one that emphasizes only physical hardship and strength to one with characteristics that more comfortably include women.

The negative construction of industries as polluters and the development of regulatory policies were made possible by the ability of environmental scientists to identify very small trace amounts of toxic and hazardous substances in air, water, or soils and the improved ability of health scientists to link illness to human exposure to such substances. We have previously argued (Schneider and Ingram 1997) that science, by itself, usually is not enough to instigate policy change. For real effectiveness, not only must there be a virtual consensus among relevant scientists about the facts (and often there is no consensus) but scientists also usually need to be aligned with interest groups and social movements, like environmentalism, that are able to capitalize on their findings.

While the alignment of scientific evidence with the interests of powerful and well-regarded groups is important in understanding policy change and change in social constructions, such analysis does not give sufficient weight to

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the power of science in framing issues that reinforce some constructions and undercut others. Try as they might, powerful nations have been unable to escape the stigma of being to blame for global warming. Scientific findings have made clear the large contributions of industrialized countries to greenhouse gasses. Science put global warming and greenhouse gasses on the agenda by tracing its causes to high energy use in industrialized nations. Despite the power of large, industrialized nations, they have been unable to escape the onus of being the greatest greenhouse gasses polluters.

Greater medical understanding of the brain's chemistry has affected the social construction of mental illness and behavioral problems. For example, the classification of attention deficit disorder has largely transformed the unruly child into a patient in need of medication. Parents are admonished not for their lack of discipline, but for their failure to get appropriate medical care for their children.

Social science also has an effect on public policies and social constructions. The poverty line below which families are deserving of aid is, for example, the product of policy analysis. Social indicators of all sorts—including consumer confidence, the unemployment rate, the crime rate, the inflation rate, and trust in government indices—are all social science inventions that carry real policy and societal consequences. Dionne Bensonsmith (chapter 9) maintains that the Moynihan Report on the pathology of black families exemplifies the way in which social science can have unintended, but very negative consequences. Nicholson-Crotty and Meier (chapter 8) note that the U.S Commission on Opium Use, convened in 1909, helped to legitimize the crackdown on opium use by the Chinese, while other narcotics went unregulated.

Finally, change in social constructions and policies sometimes occurs through incremental change in the demographic characteristics of a long-standing target population. Welfare mothers offer one of the best examples (Lieberman 1995; Schneider and Ingram 1995). From 1935 through the mid 1950s, most recipients of Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) were mainly young, white widows whose husbands had been killed in war. The predominant social construction of ADC was that of a humane program intended to permit mothers to stay home with their young children and provide them with a living wage and a loving home. As the proportion of white, war widows declined and minority single mothers increased, the social construction of "welfare mother" changed gradually to that of the irresponsible, immoral "Jezebel" or "welfare queen" (chapter 9) that eventually ended this entitlement to children in an effort to discipline or punish their mothers (chapters 10, 11).

Dynamics of Social Constructions

The social construction of deservedness has serious and long-term implications for allocating benefits and burdens in society. There is nothing benign about the

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tendency people have to construct divisive, value-laden differences between themselves and the "other"—who becomes the object of disdain. The damage is especially acute when these differences become embedded in public policies. Once embedded in policies, the differences take on the power of the state and its legitimacy.

In our previous work (Schneider and Ingram 1993; 1997), we have discussed how positive and negative constructions interact with political power to produce several different types of target populations. *Advantaged target populations* have significant political power resources and also enjoy positive social constructions as deserving people. Contemporary examples include business, science, the military, the middle class, and white people (that is, persons of European descent). *Contenders* have ample political power resources that generally equal those of advantaged groups, but contenders are not viewed as deserving. Instead, contenders such as "Wall Street bankers," "the rich," "big labor," or the "gun lobby" are recognized as quite powerful but have the negative social construction as unworthy because they are too "greedy," or they are "getting more than their share," or they are "morally bankrupt." *Dependents* are groups with few political power resources who are socially constructed as deserving in a moral sense, although helpless and usually in need of discipline. *Deviants* are in the worst situation. These are persons—such as terrorists, gang members, and criminals—who have few, if any, legitimate political power resources and who are constructed as undeserving because they are viewed as dangerous and of no value to the society.

Many policy-making arenas may become degenerative, as explained previously, in that government does not treat all people equally, but instead falls into a pattern of allocating benefits mainly to the advantaged populations and punishments to the deviants. Both of these policy arenas offer enormous political opportunity to political leaders and entrepreneurs even if they do not produce effective or efficient public policies. The powerful and well regarded are expected to reward governments, political parties, and others who advocate greater benefits and fewer burdens. Advantaged groups resent government spending on dependents, even though they recognize the importance of caring for children and others. They believe the needs of dependents should be met by local governments, families, and nonprofit organizations. Even more resented are funds allocated to deviants, except those funds necessary to inflict punishment.

The result of these policy-making dynamics—if they continue through a path-dependent process—is that policies become inefficient, ineffective, and unfair. Policies that are beneficial to advantaged populations increase as all levels of government and political parties compete with one another to provide benefits and benign regulations for the advantaged. Policies directed to the advantaged becomes oversubscribed (there is more of it than needed to meet actual societal needs), overfunded (more is spent on it than necessary), undertaxed, and underregulated. Although burdens are inflicted on advantaged populations, these

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tend to occur only when needed to regulate matters among competing powerful groups. Punishment policies may become very popular as they can generate tremendous political payoffs by advocating "get tough" policies, such as longer prison sentences without much initial impact on costs. Dependents tend to be ignored as much as possible. Policies for contenders take a somewhat different path because it is important to provide benefits to these groups—due to their political power—but to do so secretly so that others (the general public) that view them as undeserving will not know that contenders are receiving so much government largesse. Thus, policies may become very deceptive, complex, and opaque so that it is almost impossible to figure out what effects they may have. Similarly, it may become necessary to hide the true extent of government aid to advantaged groups, because a full revelation would produce the perception that they are getting more than they deserve. Thus, secrecy, complexity, deception, and opaqueness may come to be found throughout the policy-making system.

Even though governments have the power to produce policies without explanations, this is uncommon, especially in democracies, where legitimacy is a constant concern. Policies are almost always justified on logical grounds—as contributing to important ends—or in terms of fairness and justice. In degenerative policy-making systems, however, policies are not so much the result of rational analysis of problems and the crafting of solutions as they are the product of target populations seeking to frame problems in such a way that they become the obvious solution.

The rationale given for allocating benefits to advantaged populations typically involves claims that benefits must be provided because of important national interests, not because of the group's power or even their deservedness. The favorable treatment of business, industry, and science in the United States was justified originally as a way to escape the Depression and win World War II and later as a means to win the Cold War and defeat communism. When the Cold War ended, the rationale shifted to the need for economic success in a global economy, and more recently as the way to win the war against terrorism. Regardless of the rationale, the allocation pattern stayed very much the same.

The rationale for delivering burdens to deviants is that they deserve to be punished due to their irresponsible and immoral activities, or that punishment is essential to deterring such behavior. Dependents learn from policies that the lack of attention to their needs is because there are other, higher, priorities, and that others are more central to the nation's success as a whole. Rules of behavior are "for their own good," and it is unfortunate that the application of universal principles sometimes disadvantages them. When benefits are provided to dependents or to deviants—and policies sometimes do provide benefits—these are usually explained as being necessary to protect basic constitutional rights or to comply with court orders that seek to maintain rights and meet basic human

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needs. Occasionally, beneficial policies are provided to deviants when social science studies indicate that beneficial policies are effective, but this is usually accompanied by mandatory evaluations and demonstrated effectiveness.

Target Group Constructions and Institutions

New institutional research—a broad revival of interest in institutions that has swept through law, economics, sociology, and political science—provides important insights into how social constructions come to be matters of habit and taken for granted. DiMaggio and Powell (1991) focus on the cognitive, cultural explanations of how certain patterns of action emerge and persist that would seem to be irrational from a strictly utilitarian, self-interest perspective. When broad fields or subject matters are framed by social construction of target populations, material resources and social status are consistently distributed through institutions to deepen the cleavages between advantaged and other target populations. For example, the land entitlements made available to white, male veterans lifted them above others, including women, Native Americans and former Confederate soldiers of the Civil War, and allowed these beneficiaries to be entitled to a wide range of agricultural, water, and other governmental aid (Jensen 2003). Just as important, cognitive elements, such as practical consciousness and shared typification of social categories experienced as "people like us," are continually reproduced by institutions (Bourdieu 1981, cited in DiMaggio and Powell 1991). Standardized cultural forms and accounts are diffused and reproduced by institutions across time and space. Thus, the paternalistic orientation toward women and children that reformers like Francis Perkins espoused was infused into the networks of social workers in the New Deal, diffused to the states, and perpetuated into welfare policies up to the present (Mettler l998). Through institutions, the social constructions of target groups become semipermanent dispositions that are rarely questioned, even by those harmed by such constructions.

The social constructions of target groups through public policies stimulate and advance the typifications, or cognitive models, carried along by institutions and convey powerful messages about who matters in our society and who does not and what kinds of people get served by government and who is ignored or punished. This institutionalization of bias has enormous influence upon citizenship roles, group mobilization, and civic participation.

Citizenship, Mobilization, and Participation

Institutionalized differences in treatment by government and through experience with public policies carries strong messages to people that impact their orientations, identity, capacity for mobilization, participation level, and type of

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participation (Soss 2000). These messages are strikingly different depending upon the target group. Advantaged populations receive signals that their success is central to the nation's success as a whole, and that they deserve the favorable way they are treated. Understandably, advantaged groups have a very strong positive identity—one which seldom even recognizes the advantages they and their ancestors have received over the years. Contenders, on the other hand, realize that they commonly are feared and mistrusted. Thus, their policy benefits must come through subterfuge in which others, rather than themselves, appear to profit. Contenders come to believe that politics is a corrupt game that requires cunning strategies to be successful. They learn to look for opportunities when no one is watching, to carefully craft opaque policy with complicated provisions, through which government will insure their continued success. Dependents learn that they are not very important, they need to be disciplined, and they must look to families, faith-based institutions, nonprofits, and local government to meet their needs. The lessons that institutions (including public policies) teach to dependents disempowers them, even as it convinces them of their lack of importance. Often, they are treated rudely and inefficiently. They may discover that they have little recourse. Deviants learn that their problems are their own fault and that they deserve nothing but disrespect, hatred, incarceration, and isolation from society. They, too, are disempowered through public policy and other institutions. They tend to view government as corrupt.

Social identity is a central ingredient for the propensity to become active and for the success or failure of social movements (Brown 2000). It is interesting to note the dramatically different lessons that policy teaches about social identity. Advantaged populations identify with others like themselves—white people, businessmen or businesswomen, the middle class, scientists—and never doubt their ability to mobilize together for effective action. However, they seldom need grassroots social movements, because their access to policy is insured through lobbying efforts, as well as through the responsiveness that government officials at all levels grant to them by virtue of their political power resources and their image as good, hardworking, loyal Americans. Contenders also have a strong positive identity that resists negative labels and has enabled them, over time, to gain considerable political strength even when they are not well regarded. Labor unions offer a strong example of intense group loyalty compared with the far less positive image outside of it. Gays and lesbians, too, have gained considerable political power, but first a common, positive identity—that reconstructed the negative to a positive—had to be developed. "Black power" and the pride of being black that emerged most clearly in the 1960s, was a central motivating factor in the civil rights movement of African Americans.

Dependents may have a positive *personal* identity, but little connection with others that would serve as a strong *social* identity. The feminist movement transformed women's sense of personal worth into a social identity, for example, through consciousness-raising small groups that forged bonds among women

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and ingrained the legitimacy of women's place in the political world. Some persons viewed as deviants have a negative personal and social identity. It is very difficult, for example, for prostitutes, ex-convicts, or others who are stigmatized as part of the "dangerous class" (chapter 8) with a negative identity to organize themselves into effective political groups. It has happened, however. Gang members have come to embrace the very features that others disrespect—their special language, music, dress, and propensity for violence have become central to a shared social identity. In some instances, people labeled as deviants attempt to reframe their identity. For example, welfare mothers may begin to develop a strong, positive social identity if they can reframe their image from that of the "freeloader, immoral, irresponsible woman" to a "caring mother who would do almost anything to help her children" (chapter 11).

Policies may have unintended or counterintuitive (or both) impacts on identity. When policies—backed by the full authority of the state—embrace negative constructions of groups, they legitimate these constructions and help spread them throughout society. But policies also may be positive agents of change for marginalized groups when they challenge institutionalized negative constructions; for example, by including a negatively viewed group in policies that benefit much more positively viewed groups. Such challenges are difficult and risky for policy makers who seek public approval of their actions and must seek reelection on a regular basis. In addition, policies can provide specific points of mobilization and attack, particularly if the negative constructions are firmly ingrained in policy documents at high and visible levels. Such documents make explicit and, therefore, make vulnerable institutionalized bias that is largely invisible and taken for granted. By focusing attention on a specific policy, negatively constructed groups may use the perceived unfairness or inaccuracy to mobilize people and to change the policy that has offended them. Identity, however, is a fundamental precursor for social mobilization. Unless a negatively viewed group can either resist the construction and reframe it into something more positive, or adopt the negative frame as a status symbol of its own, mobilization is not likely to occur.

The politics of race, class, gender, and sexuality are, in general, an attempt by previously disadvantaged groups and their advocates to reconstruct themselves as more deserving or to gain sufficient political power so that image will become less important. The resistance from established or privileged groups—either to a change in the social construction or to the increased political clout of previously marginalized groups—creates intense divisiveness around such issues. Policy makers may exploit these divisions for political gain.

Although institutions differ in many important ways, there is a striking homogeneity of practices and arrangements in organizational life. This sameness extends to patterns that appear across different policy areas. Groups advantaged in housing policy, for example, also make out well in tax policy, economic development policy, and other areas. Similarly, dependents and deviants in welfare and

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criminal justice policy are less likely to be beneficiaries of educational opportunities and student loans. The systematic reinforcement of messages about who is deserving and entitled and who is not greatly amplifies policy messages. Public policy, of course, is not the only element in the institutionalized pattern of bias that impacts participation but, over time, its contribution is significant in terms of both the type and amount of participation. There is great irony in political participation patterns in the United States. The nation that holds itself up as a model of democratic governance in fact suffers from low and declining levels of political participation and vastly unequal access to the many different avenues of participation. Even though the nation has now achieved almost universal suffrage for adults who are legal citizens (see chapter 2 for exceptions), only 71 percent of those eligible to vote were even registered for the 2000 election. As a rule, fewer than half of the registered voters actually cast ballots. What is perhaps most tragic is that the dependent and deviant populations most likely to profit from policy change are by far the least likely to vote. The lowest levels of participation are recorded by the eighteen- to twenty-one year-old age group, persons with less than high school education, those in the lowest income brackets, and those of African-American, Native-American, or Latin-American heritage. They appear to have embraced the message that they do not matter—a message that they repeatedly experience in their association with institutions, their interactions with agents of the state, and the rationale surrounding public policy issues.

There are many other avenues of participation in public and civic life beyond voting. For example, people may belong to neighborhood associations that act as advocates on behalf of their community, or they may serve as volunteers with nonprofit organizations that actively provide support and services to persons who need them. People participate by giving to charitable organizations, working with their local schools to improve educational opportunities, participating in neighborhood cleanup campaigns, or getting involved in social movements on behalf of disadvantaged groups. People participate by expressing their opinions or requesting assistance from elected representatives or government agencies staffed by professional public servants. As noted earlier, entrepreneurs create social movements, neighborhood associations, nonprofits, and interest groups that become vehicles for political action. The level of participation in all these forms of civic and political work appears to be low, declining, and vastly uneven depending upon different race, ethnicity, social class, and educational level. Robert Putnam (2000) argues that each generation since those born before World War II has participated at a lower level than the generation before. The title of his well-known book *(Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community)* notes the irony that more Americans than ever are engaged in bowling as an activity, but fewer than ever belong to bowling teams.

The reasons for low and declining civic participation in the second half of the twentieth century are multifaceted and contested. What is important to our

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discussion is that the likelihood of participation varies consistently among the socially constructed groups—advantaged, disadvantaged, contenders, and deviants—that we have identified. The highest rates of participation are recorded by the groups that already benefit the most from public policies. At the same time, people who are most *disadvantaged* by public policies—and who would seem to have the most to gain from active, vigorous political participation—participate much less.

The messages sent by public policies and other institutions is reflected in how people perform their role as citizens. Participation is higher among those with greater trust in government and those who believe that their participation will make a difference—that is, they have higher levels of efficacy in their relationship with government (Verba et al. 1993). Additionally, participation is greater among those with a highly developed sense of their own interests, who recognize that they are part of a group that has common interests and that they (and their group) have much to gain (or lose) from government action. Those who believe that their cause is worthy, that there are many others just like themselves who are mobilized for effective action, and who see their cause as being beneficial to the entire nation are more apt to participate than those who have a poorly developed sense of their own interests or who do not identify with others who have common interests.

The privileges of wealth are everywhere evident in American society, particularly in politics. Wealth is an important aspect of participation. Those who are better off may feel that they have more to protect, and wealth provides both an incentive and a means of political influence. Some forms of participation, in fact, have dramatically increased over the last half-century, and most of these are tied directly or indirectly to the role of wealth in politics. Organized interest groups, with paid lobbyists, are far more common today than at the beginning of the twentieth century. Initiative petitions—which allow important public policy issues to be placed on the ballot for a vote by the citizenry—have become a far more common method of participation. Originally intended to serve grassroots movements and thwart the power of legislatures, initiative petitions are now often the tool of wealthy interests or individuals who are able to hire persons to gain the signatures and launch massive media campaigns against a (typically) unorganized and underfunded group. On the other hand, advocacy groups that are funded by philanthropic foundations and led by elites who work on behalf of dependents or deviants are far more common than in the past.

The opportunity structure for mobilizing social movements is greatly affected by policies—and public policies clearly favor mobilizing some kinds of groups over others (Meyer 2002). As Mara Sidney (chapter 4) illustrates, fair housing laws were designed to impede the mobilization of minority groups. Policies send messages about identity, as we have argued. Some scholars contend that recognition of a common *positive* identity is central to the creation of social movements. Several of the great social movements of the twentieth century—

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the civil rights movement, the women's movement, and the gay/lesbian movement—all engaged previously disadvantaged people into a potent political force. First the movements raised the consciousness of these group members as worthy people who, if they worked together, could make a difference in the way they were treated by government. The importance of identity also can be seen in the exceptionally low participation rates and lack of organization among the homeless, prostitutes, ex-convicts, gang members, and welfare recipients. These groups suffer from a negative identity that must first be overcome before sufficient trust and motivation is found for political participation.

Policies also impact participation because they determine the rules of participation and the value of various kinds of resources in the political game. Again, policies tend to grant maximum participatory capacity to advantaged populations and the least capacity to dependents and deviants. We have already noted that suffrage was extended first to white, male property owners—clearly an advantaged population—and then gradually to others based on their moral qualities and their competence to exercise the vote. Only reluctantly was the vote extended to nonwhite persons, women, and the eighteen- to twenty-one year-old age group. For many years, the rules governing voter registration excluded people through the use of poll taxes and literacy tests that were administered locally, with local officials holding complete discretion for determining whether or not someone had paid for or had passed the literacy test. Even as late as the 1960s, some states permitted poll challengers to ask those standing in line to vote to read a section of the U.S. Constitution; if they were unable to do so, their right to vote would be challenged (Dean 2001).

Persons convicted of felonies, or those under guardianship due to mental or physical disability, are still unable to vote in most parts of the United States (chapter 2). Even though court decisions have been constructed around the principle of "one person, one vote," this principle is not extended to persons under the age of eighteen, even if they could show they were individually competent to vote. Interestingly, no one seems to make the argument that children, or others considered incompetent to vote, should be represented anyway. After all, they clearly have interests in the polity and could be represented through their parents' or guardians' vote. In this as in other cases, standardized social constructions of these groups as helpless dependents are so thoroughly institutionalized that bias continues unexamined.

Policies also grant an advantage to some groups when they permit money to play such a large role in elections and influence. In general, courts have been reluctant to allow effective regulation of contributions to political causes and have viewed money donations as a form of speech. Even when Congress passes campaign finance reform legislation, as it did in 2002, implementation through established structures is problematic. Money has fueled the dramatic increase in the use of initiative petitions, and it undergirds the massive lobbying efforts of powerful groups.

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In addition to structuring the rules for voting and for the use of wealth, policies also establishes rules of participation during the implementation phase of the policy process. Policies that direct regulations toward advantaged populations, for example, almost always require public hearings that permit members of these groups to influence how the policies will actually be applied. To help mask the unpopularity of regulations, the impacted groups may be granted little-noticed points of access and the ability to challenge implementation processes through the courts. Even when policies require public hearings, these sometimes are dominated by experts to the virtual exclusion of ordinary citizens. Sidney (chapter 4) explains how housing legislation permitted voluntary compliance by banks—with no sanctions for violating the law—and granted no role for community-based organizations in challenging the lack of compliance by local banks.

In addition to these direct effects, policy allocations of benefit and burdens have profound impacts over a long period of time. Mettler (2002b) demonstrates the long-term effects that the GI bill has had on the participation patterns of World War II veterans. By providing grants for higher education to all World War II veterans, this policy provided higher education to an entire generation of persons, many of whom would not ever have attended college due to racial and financial barriers. Mettler's account, however, also documents that the design and implementation of this policy was one of inclusiveness. It was easy to establish one's eligibility: colleges and universities welcomed the veterans. They were treated with respect and as valuable members of the society. In contrast, policies that permitted slavery and later discrimination in the private sector—that denied property, home ownership, and loans to establish small businesses—have depressed the generation of wealth by African Americans and other minorities through many successive generations (Lipsitz 1995).

Soss (chapter 11) demonstrates differences in participation patterns between persons receiving AFDC and those receiving SSDI. AFDC policy is designed in a way that sends negative messages to recipients—they are untrustworthy, they ought to be working rather than staying home, they are irresponsible and immoral in having so many children, and they are receiving benefits only due to the government's generosity. SSDI, on the other hand, treats recipients with respect and does not engage them in morality arguments or difficulties in establishing eligibility. SSDI recipients have no case workers who counsel them about how they should live. The results are predictable—AFDC clients have exceptionally low participation rates and negative identity. Recipients often attempt to escape the negative identity by dividing the group into those who, in fact, fit the negative construction, but do not include themselves in this group. SSDI recipients, on the other hand, do not separate themselves into positive and negative recipients, have a stronger positive identity, and have markedly higher participation rates. Lieberman and Ingram and Schneider (1995) have argued that the *Social Security Act of 1935,* which designed one kind

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of policy for the elderly and a very different kind for mothers of young children, actually contributed significantly to the current power of the retired persons' lobby.

Across a wide variety of policy areas, the delivery of policy has been taken over by third parties, usually nonprofit or even for-profit contractors. Whether these contractors exhibit the same level of commitment to public service as government agencies can be questioned. Nongovernmental agents may follow the same pattern of institutionalized incentives that leads to biased service among government agencies, but they do not experience the same kinds of corrective governmental checks and balances (Posner 2002). Much has been written about the lack of accountability in policy designs with long implementation chains involving many levels of government (Pressman and Wildavsky 1973; Mazmanian and Sabatier 1983). The problem of accountability is greatly aggravated when services are contracted out. Recipients of benefits are often unaware that government, not the private contractors, should get credit for the help it is providing. Even more serious, recipients of inadequate services often do not know which agency should be held accountable and to whom to complain when performance falls short. As Jurik and Cowgil (chapter 6) indicate, implementation of policies for dependent groups by nonprofit organizations can fall far short of the stated policy goals. Complexity of structure in third-party government generally raises the costs of participation due to the increased efforts required of citizens to unravel lines of authority and accountability. Consequently, third-party policy designs that were supported because they brought government closer to the people may, in fact, lead to confusion and alienation (Smith and Ingram 2002).

To sum up, we are concerned that public policy often sends messages harmful to democracy. We are further alarmed that so many of the policy-making contexts in the United States today fit this discouraging model of degenerative politics that exacerbates inequality, injustice, and inefficiency in solving problems while eroding ethics of public involvement. In contrast, however, there are other models guided by other values, such as pragmatic problem solving, efficiency, responsiveness to all interests, ethical communication, fairness, and justice (Schneider and Ingram 1999). There are governing institutions that create an ethics quite different from those in degenerative systems.

Consequences of Social Constructions for Citizenship

Most democratic theorists contend that democracy requires a knowledgeable, active, and engaged citizenry. We and others have argued that successful governance also requires an empathic citizenry that is capable of understanding and pursuing its own interests, but that also acknowledges and respects the interests of others (Ingram and Schneider 1993; Ingram and Smith 1993; Schneider and

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Ingram 1997; Landy 1993). What is required of a "good citizen" includes participation, empathy, and recognition of both public and private interests. Citizenship is first of all a legal category; but beyond that, it is a sense of belonging to the broader society—a standing within the polity that demands respect (Shklar 1991). Citizenship is about membership in a society where one is respected, included, involved, and important to the success of the society. Thomas H. Marshall (1964) conceptualized citizenship as a series of phases beginning with rights that are extended by the state and, eventually, leading to full social, economic, and political equality.

We have explained how policies create different levels of participation through their direct effects on voting, their requirements for involvement, and through the differential messages they send to people. Policies impact citizenship because they encourage and facilitate participation by some, but discourage or exclude participation by others. Policies impact citizenship when they directly or indirectly create inequalities in political participation and when they contribute to the social construction of some persons as deserving and others as undeserving members of the society. Policy designs play an important role in dividing people into those who should and should not be fully participating citizens of the society. The social constructions of target populations become deeply embedded in the characteristics of public policies. People's experiences with these policies actually impact and help shape their identity, their orientation to government, their capacity for mobilization, their direct access to policy making, and their understanding of what people "like me" can and should expect from government. Policies send powerful messages about the role of citizens that make a difference in people's sense of efficacy, trust, and what others believe they deserve from government.

Policies impact people's ability to fulfill the role expected of knowledgeable, engaged, empathic citizens of the society. Public policies teach lessons—sometimes they attempt to teach the lessons of citizenship to everyone, but often they teach different lessons to advantaged, contender, dependent, and deviant populations. Sometimes they provide the means and motivation for active engagement to all segments of the population; but other times they disempower the disadvantaged. Policies often fail in their role of teaching the importance of public as well as private interests. To dependent populations, however, policies fail because they teach them only about public interests and to defer to others who are more important. Policies sometimes contribute to the construction of the "other" and exacerbate divisiveness around differences in race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality. In other cases, policies actively seek to overcome divisiveness and bring about greater understanding and equality.

Finally, policies impact citizenship in the most inclusive sense articulated by Marshall through differential allocation of benefits and burdens. These allocations produce inequalities that last through many generations (Lipsitz 1995). On the other hand, when policies lead to actions that protect rights, reverse

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discriminatory practices, and meet the promise of political equality and equality of opportunity, then they become a positive force for more inclusive citizenship.

The chapters in this book continue the examination we have begun of the social construction of deservedness through public policies. Some authors trace the historical development of the positive (or negative) construction of groups; others examine how social constructions of deservedness plays out in nonprofit arenas and during the policy implementation process. Still others examine the roles of elected leaders, social science, policy analysis, and moral or policy entrepreneurs in constructing groups and embedding constructions into policy designs and institutions. The enormous significance of the social construction of deservedness is illustrated in the final chapter, in which Joseph Soss systematically compares the policy design of SSDI with the design of AFDC. This evidence shows that it is possible for public policies to either strengthen or disempower the groups of citizens those policies serve.

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