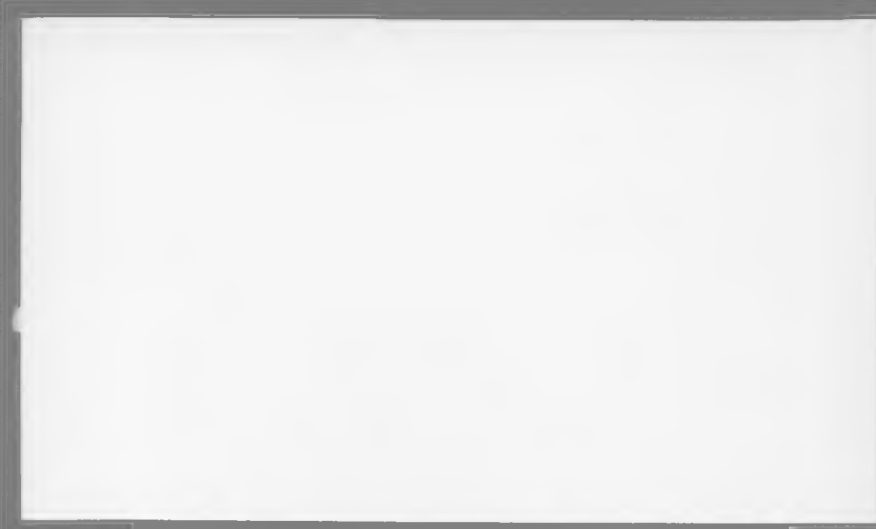


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DECISIONS, NONDECISIONS, AND METADECISIONS*

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DECISIONS, NONDECISIONS, AND METADECISIONS

I. Introduction

The controversy over community power was wearing thin in the early sixties when Bachrach and Baratz seemed to breath new life into the subject with two classic papers on "nondecisionmaking" (1962; 1963). Like Dahl (1953), Bachrach and Baratz objected to "the sociological method" of studying community power--making inferences from positions, resources, or reputations, but they also objected to any alternative founded on the observations of contested decisions. They based their objection on the fact that making a decision is only one stage in the process by which policy is formed. Observing decisions, they conceded that one discovers a pluralist politics. But, they argued, no theory of power is complete that does not study predecision politics, in which issues are identified, alternative courses of action defined, and agenda decided. Many factors that are unproblematic at the decision stage are of fundamental importance in predecision politics, such as the legitimacy of issues, actors, and tactics. They did not argue that predecision politics were in any way theoretically distinct: their argument rested, in fact, on the unity of the policy process. It is this unity that gives significance to the central "fact" that, in their view, called for explanation: by the time an agenda is decided, only "safe" issues remain, issues that do not challenge a society's existing system of inequalities, the mechanisms through which unequal benefits and burdens are allocated, or the values, beliefs, rules, practices and procedures on which these inequalities are based. "Important" issues, meaning redistributive issues, are not

observed at the decision stage of the process because predecision politics operate to suppress them. Observing the predecision process, what one finds, they insisted, is that the politics of "important" issues is elitist. It was the process that operates to suppress "important" issues to which they referred by the term "nondecisionmaking." The mechanisms of this process were basically two: One founded on (a largely potential) power that, though not visibly exercised, operated to suppress issues through a "law of anticipated reactions" (Friedrich, 1963); the other founded on the "mobilization of bias" (Schattschneider, 1960), i.e., the operation of the legitimating values, beliefs, rules, practices and procedures of a society, which they assumed to be indissolubly linked with power. The combined effect of these two mechanisms gave to the basic institutional and social structure of a society a central part to play in shaping its political agenda.

On the main points, Bachrach and Baratz seemed un rebuttable: That decisionmaking was only one stage of the policy process, that no theory of power is complete that does not take into account pre-decision politics, that many questions that had not seemed problematic for a theory of decisionmaking were important, such as the legitimation of issues, actors, and tactics. But "nondecisions" posed a nasty problem of method: they are the undecided issues of a polity but there are an infinite number of things a polity does not decide, only some of which are suppressed issues. The others were never issues to begin with. The problem was to distinguish the nonissue from the suppressed issue. Bachrach and Baratz provided no independent test of issueness, i.e., of the intensity and/or scope of a population's preferences for change, hence could not empirically identify nondecisions. (See Frey, 1971; McFarland, 1969; Merelman, 1963; Wolfinger, 1971.) There the subject seemed to

stick: Frey (1971) and Bachrach and Baratz themselves (1970) tried solving the problem, without much success. McFarland (1969) recognized fairly quickly that comparison provided an independent criterion of issueness and his solution was quickly and brilliantly applied by Crenson (1971). But the complexity and multicollinearity of the variables correlated with the "objective" causes of issueness, together with problems of cross-level inferences about issueness from aggregate measures and about dynamics of the process from cross-sectional analysis left serious problems of internal validity unsolved. (Cf Polsby, 1980, ch.11).

The new vitality that nondecisionmaking had seemed to breathe into the study of power quickly began to flag as tedious, tiresome controversy over Bachrach and Baratz's methods displaced the earlier controversy over "sociological" methods. The study of agendas, as a matter of fact, flourished--but at the expense of the framework and the problem to which Bachrach and Baratz had directed it. Behaviorists, the dominating force in empirically-oriented political science, made up for their earlier neglect of the subject by vigorous and systematic investigation of agendas (e.g., see Braybrooke, 1974; Jones 1977, chs. 3-4; the first three papers in May and Wildavsky, 1973; Polsby, 1971; Walker, 1977). Important books on the subject, like Cobb and Elder's Participation in American Politics (1972), were widely read, cited, and discussed. Agendas had a major impact on the study of international relations (see Keohane and Nye, 1977, who apply them brilliantly). They even became the center-piece of a new "paradigm" of global politics (Mansbach and Vasquez, 1981). But the study of agendas, however fruitful, is not the study of the politics of the suppression of issues. The controversy over the "suppression" of issues itself quickly took on the irreconcilable character of a quarrel over foundation questions--over logics of

observation and inference, the empirical status of theoretical unobservables, and basic conceptualizations of the nature of man and society. Like most such quarrels it generated a great deal of heat but very little light. By 1975 it seemed to achieve stalemate: Debnam (1975) insisted not only that propositions about nondecisions were untestable but that the concepts and methods of the theory were obscure and superfluous. Bachrach and Baratz (1975) replied that their theory was being assessed by the wrong kinds of criteria and came close to saying that it was good in itself, testable or not. Lukes (1975), from a quite different perspective, argued that Bachrach and Baratz had not gone far enough in exploiting false consciousness, having yielded too much to the behaviorists. Reviewing Lukes' book, Baratz (1977) turned over much the same ground already thoroughly plowed in the early sixties. Meanwhile, very little research was being done. One can count four not very compelling case studies--Bachrach and Baratz, 1970, Bachrach and Bergman, 1973; Molotch, 1970] and an earlier precursor, Vidich and Bensman, 1958--and only two serious, systematic investigations (Crenson, 1971, Smith, 1979).

As a result, it came to be fairly widely agreed that, although Bachrach and Baratz had had some insights of permanent value, their theory fell far short of its original promise. But this was not due to any overwhelming evidence against it or in favor of some alternative. It was due partly to criticism of their value-laden, imprecise, and circular language, partly to criticism of their methods of observation and inference, but most importantly to criticism of the strategy that lay behind their theory. It was felt in some quarters, at least, that even if their difficulties in theory construction and method were remedied, their hypotheses would still be untestable because they rested on

assumptions about materialism, individual self-interest, and the nature (and objectivity) of conflict that were irremediably untestable.

In one sense this was true: One cannot test assumptions about the universality of two-person, 0-sum conflict unless one is willing to give up false consciousness as a convenient escape, one cannot test assumptions about the objectivity of conflict without begging the question; one cannot test highly general axioms about individual self-interest--they are purely tautological, asserting no more than "people prefer to do what they prefer to do." At this level, conflict theory is irremediably untestable. But the same is true of every alternative strategy with which one might replace it. It is as true of behaviorism (or functionalism, or phenomenology, or ecology), for example, as "conflict theory." What must be shown is not only that Bachrach and Baratz rest their theory on an irremediably untestable strategy but that they offer nothing else. But this seems to us too strong a claim. All the criticisms of Bachrach and Baratz could be true--as a matter of fact, in our view they are--and it could still be argued that they are remediable, and if remedied that Bachrach and Baratz have some testable hypotheses. It is this view that we take in the present paper. This does not mean that we claim their theory is true, what we claim, rather, is that the theory is corrigible.

Accordingly, our purpose in the present paper is to isolate a core of testable theory in Bachrach and Baratz's several works. To accomplish this purpose, in Part II we explicate the terms of their theory, rendering them more precise and removing the causal assumptions built into them that make them circular, and provide a method of observation and inference that makes the propositions built up from these terms testable.

In Part III, we construct a specific technique, based on this method of observation and inference, that meets the strictest possible standards of internal validity and employ it to test a number of hypotheses implied in the theory.

II. An Explication of Bachrach and Baratz.

The objectives of Part II are to render the terms of Bachrach and Baratz's theory more precise and provide an independent test of issue-ness that will render a theory using them testable. Section A describes their theory and the strategy underlying it; section B briefly describes the most common objections to it; section C explicates the central terms of the theory and a criterion of issue-ness that permits their operationalization.

A. Bachrach and Baratz's theory.

The strategy that underlies Bachrach and Baratz's theory is founded on two-person, constant-sum conflict. All actors in the theory are rational and driven solely by self-interest. All benefits (all resources and rewards) are "biased", i.e., unequally distributed; all structures of domination are "biased", i.e., participation in them is unequally distributed; and the two kinds of bias are perfectly correlated. Because of the conflict assumption, any system can be completely described by the relations between two actors: we will call them A (who benefits) and B (who does not). The theory characterizes A and B by their location in the system of bias. Because actors are rationally self-interested and the distribution of benefits is biased, the only question to be settled is why B does not attempt to challenge the existing system of inequalities. One can assume the motives of the have-nots. Challenge can, therefore, be taken for granted whether actually observed or not.

All questions addressed by their theory are therefore framed in terms of what delays or prevents change. The principal focus of the theory is on the behavior of A. However, because A obviously never challenges his own position, the behavior of A on which the theory focuses is entirely reactive. B, on the other hand, is both proactor and reactor. B initiates; A reacts, B then reacts to A's reactions.

The society of which A and B are the (only) two parts is characterized by the distribution of benefits among members, the manner (the mechanisms) in which such benefits are allocated, and the values, beliefs, rules, practices and procedures that create and maintain these mechanisms. The polity of this society consists of some authoritative procedure by which collective decisions are made and one or more interests with legitimate access to this authoritative procedure (hence "members" of the polity). This polity is both small and unrepresentative, hence also "biased" (from Schattschneider, 1960), and the bias of the polity correlates perfectly with the biased distribution of benefits. All members of the polity are A's, no B's are members.

The policy made by this polity is the outcome of a complex formative process. A simplification of Bachrach and Baratz's conception of this process is shown in figure 1a. The omitted details are largely irrelevant and this simplification is in much the same spirit as theirs (cf 1970, ch. 4, particularly their figure 2). The crux of this process is still the decision stage, at which a collective choice is made among alternative possible joint policies. But it is extended both backwards and forwards: there is a predecision stage, in which actors are deciding just what it is that they will decide, and a post-decision stage in which policy is implemented. At any stage, a polity may either do something

or nothing with any particular issue. At the predecision stage, for example, the polity may decide that an issue must be decided and formulate possible policies, say x, or y, between which it will decide; or it may not recognize an issue or not consider it political or not consider x or y among its policies. If it decides to decide between x and y, the policies x and y are the polity's agenda. If some policy, say x, is a challenge, and can reasonably be said to exist whether it is on the polity's agenda or not, it is assumed by the theory to be suppressed if it is not on the agenda. Such suppressed issues are called nondecisions.

(FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE)

At different times, Bachrach and Baratz have defined nondecisions as the "mobilization of bias" in the interest of suppressing issues that threaten the status quo (1962), as keeping issues covert through the mobilization of bias or the use of force or power (1963), or as a decision by A that thwarts challenge by B (1970).¹ They can occur at any stage of the process: Issues are most easily suppressed before they reach the decision stage, but they can be suppressed at the decision stage by tabling them, referring to committee, or prioritizing them into legislative oblivion and they can be suppressed at the post-decision stage either by not implementing policy at all or by using the discretionary powers of the public bureaucracy to reshape intended policy in A's interests.

Bachrach and Baratz give their greatest attention to pre-decision politics. Figure 1b shows this process in more detail. They distinguish (as many others do) a recognition or identification stage, in which some feature of a society or its situation is recognized as a "problem"

that is defined as "political", i.e., something about which the polity can and should do something; a stage in which this "issue" is specified, i.e., alternative courses of action defined, objectives of such action identified, and the relation between alternatives and objectives established; and finally, a stage in which some of these possible policies are made part of the formal agenda of the polity. An alternative preferred by none is not, in Bachrach and Baratz's view, a nondecision. But any alternative preferred by B to any on the agenda has obviously been nondecided. Again, this can occur at any stage of predecision politics: It can mean not recognizing a problem that exists, or defining it as private; not identifying an alternative that is actually preferred; or not making an issue, or a preferred alternative, part of the polity's agenda for decision.

Thus, at any stage of a rather complex policy process an issue can be either suppressed or reshaped. In accounting for the fate of an issue, Bachrach and Baratz throughout think of predecision politics as an interactive outcome of the dual mobilization of actors A and B. The principal behavior of A is the "mobilization of bias". The mobilization of bias consists of three kinds of behavior: making rules, reinforcing rules, and invoking rules. It is assumed that rules made by the polity are biased, in fact that all rules are biased, benefiting some more than others. Rules are, in fact, assumed to be purely instruments of power and it is purely power that makes them. Because "power" in this particular sense means membership in the polity, and it is in the interests of the polity's members that the rules are made, the bias of the rules is perfectly correlated with the bias of the larger system of stratification. A, therefore, finds it always in his interest to reinforce the existing

values, beliefs, rules, practices and procedures of society which create and maintain this system and the "mobilization of bias" is in fact the normal routine behavior of any society. Although A thus acts to reinforce the rules at all times, whether or not there is any immediate and concrete reason for doing so, the making and invoking of rules depends on what kinds of issues arise in the policy process.

Issues are characterized by Bachrach and Baratz in terms of their consequences for the existing system of bias. It is redistributive issues, i.e. challenges to the existing system of bias, that precipitate the mobilization of the values, beliefs, rules, practices and procedures of the society so as to delay or prevent such challenges from ever reaching the polity's agenda. In particular, emergence of a new kind of actor claiming legitimate access to the polity is a challenge resisted by the mobilization of bias--one of the most important properties of the polity is its proficiency in maintaining its boundaries against encroachment by nonmembers.

The principal behavior of B, of course, is challenge. At each stage of the policy process, B either does or does not recognize an issue, does or does not express his views if he does recognize it, and is or is not mobilized--in the resource-mobilization sense--to accomplish his objectives. Three factors determine B's behavior: First, the level of resources available to B; second, the extent of B's dependence on A and vulnerability to sanctions controlled by him; and third, the legitimacy of B as a political actor and of the tactics available to B. In particular, what the mobilization of bias does from B's point of view is to define B's issue as criminal or subversive, delegitimize B as a political actor, and make the tactics available to him illegitimate.

The aggregate outcome of the A and the B processes is a self-maintaining system of bias. At the aggregate level, the principal variable is simply the likelihood that an issue or policy is in fact decided. One factor in this is issueness--the intensity and scope of preferences for some alternative to the existing policy of a polity. Issueness arises out of the existing bias of the distribution of benefits. But both the existence and the mobilization of bias operate to counteract the effect that the issueness of bias causes. Bias in the distribution of resources decreases the likelihood of mobilization for collective action and increases B's dependence on, and vulnerability to sanctions controlled by, A. Hence, challenge does not arise in the first instance because B does not have the resources required to mount it and even if he did the power-dependence relation between A and B would operate to produce compliance by B with easily anticipated negative reactions by A. If a challenge does emerge, A possesses the authority to invoke (or if necessary make) values, beliefs, rules, practices and procedures that define the challenge as crime or subversion, the challenger as an outsider, the challenger's tactics as unwarranted; and, if necessary, they justify forceful oppression.

The concrete details of the nondecisionmaking process depend on the particular stage of the policy process at which it operates. At the identification stage of the process, the myths and institutional practices of the society make most challenges (literally) unthinkable. The status quo, in a Berger-Luckmann-like world, acquires a facticity that removes it from the world of human creations and hence from a world of things which a polity can or should change. If B does come to recognize an issue, he is still not likely to voice his preferences because existing procedural

rules and institutional practices deprive him of access to the polity, he is vulnerable to the negative reactions he anticipates from A, and lacks resources to make protest effective. The same, of course, is true for any B: Hence, any one B must also be uncertain of support by others in the same position as he is, and therefore view the prospects for collective action as at best uncertain, at worst poor. If B does voice his views, the fact that B lacks legitimate access to the polity makes him vulnerable to mobilization of bias by A which, in turn, makes it legitimate for the state, in A's interests, to oppress B by force if he persists in doing so. At the specification stage of the process, an issue may be recognized but all the same factors operate to suppress the most threatening possible solutions or reshape the issue so that only "safe" solutions are considered. At the agenda stage of the process, the chief importance of the mobilization of bias lies in the decisive control it gives to A of the agenda procedure itself. A has the legitimate right to use this power to decide that an issue is not to be decided. B, who has no such powers, has no redress; or, more exactly, can seek redress only from A. (There are no disinterested agents of authority in Bachrach and Baratz's world.) Thus, the process is hermetically sealed unless some exogenous force disrupts it: the values, beliefs, rules, practices and procedures of society create and maintain the mechanisms through which benefits are allocated; these mechanisms create, and subsequently operate to reproduce, the existing distribution of benefits; the existing distribution of benefits creates the interests that motivate the making, reinforcing, and invoking of rules which operate to maintain the existing mechanisms of allocation, hence the existing distribution of benefits.

B. Criticisms of Bachrach and Baratz's theory.

Criticisms of Bachrach and Baratz's theory are of three kinds: criticisms of the way it defines its central terms, of the conflict assumptions underlying them, and their operationalization, hence testability.

The criticisms of its central terms, and particularly of "non-decisions," are legion: they are value-loaded, imprecise, ambiguous, circular. Bachrach and Baratz define words after the fashion of Samuel Johnson, whose dictionary, for example, defined an excise tax as a "hateful tax...levied by wretches." They have a predilection for rich, evocative language that not only stretches the word "bias" to cover virtually every feature of institutional and social structure, but also uses "nondecision" ambiguously to refer sometimes to an event (a decision intended to suppress an issue), sometimes to an outcome (the issue suppressed), and sometimes to a process (nondecisionmaking as distinct from nondecision). (See particularly Bachrach and Baratz, 1970 and their discussion of Debnam's "errors of interpretation" in Bachrach & Baratz, 1975.) The confusion of meaning is exaggerated by the kind of primitive terms used to define nondecisions: it is defined by other terms, like "the mobilization of bias" or the "importance" of issues that are as much in need of explication as nondecision itself. (Frey, 1971; McFarland, 1969; Wolfinger, 1971). They also have a predilection for condensing whole theories in a word. To define nondecision as the mobilization of bias in the interest of suppressing issues that threaten the status quo, or as keeping an issue covert by using bias, power, or force, or as a decision that suppresses issues that threaten the interests of decision-makers makes any theory using the term

circular. In two cases the effect is defined by its causes, in one the cause is defined by its effects. (The same difficulty afflicts Frey's otherwise very intelligent defense and reformulation of Bachrach and Baratz--see Frey, 1971. He ends with a definition in terms of power both as cause and criterion of suppressed issues.

Many objections to the terms of the theory have been not so much to circularity itself, however, as to the kind of theory implicit in the causes (or effects) condensed in them: that all conflicts are two-person, constant-sum conflicts, that group decisionmaking can be thought of as dyadic interpersonal power, that the behavior of any polity is completely driven by pure self-interest. There are no disinterested parties, no group interest, and the interests of the parties at conflict are always diametrically opposed. To the extent that one takes these claims not as tautological axioms of a strategy but as matters of empirical fact, critics have not been willing to accept them as realistic depictions of communities, objecting that there may be more than two interests and some people may be indifferent (Merelman, 1968). Nor have they been willing to accept the assumption that the mobilization of bias depends purely on self-interest (Merelman, 1968; Wolfinger, 1971). And objections to dyadic conceptions of the polity have of course been common (cf Lehman, 1969 or Nagel, 1975). It would be equally unrealistic to assume there is no conflict in a community. But the two extremes are not the only possibilities: a conflict with n parties and a mixture of competitive and cooperative motives is probably more realistic than either perfect conflict or perfect consensus.

But the most serious objections to the concept of "nondecisions" have had to do with testability. Because there are an infinite number

of things a polity does not decide, a testable theory of nondecisions must provide some line of demarcation between the suppressed issue and the nonissue--the matter in which no one has an interest. This requires a definition of "issue" that is independent both of the position of an issue in the decision process and its eventual fate. Neither of Bachrach and Baratz's methods of observation and inference satisfy this requirement. They rely on inferring the interests of members of a polity either from its distribution of benefits or from its system of values, beliefs, rules, practices, and procedures. The first method relies heavily on the ability of an outside, objective observer to validly infer the value of benefits to members. Use of the method has led, in Frey's view for example, to the foundering of the whole subject on conflicts over implicit and contestable value judgments (Frey, 1971). The second method is problematic because it is no simple matter to assess the norms and values of a society and in any case it begs the question to assume they are equivalent to the interests of members. The strongest objections of all have been to the assumption that if these methods do not yield conclusions consistent with the behavior of the members of a polity this is explained by false consciousness, itself a form of nondecision. Except for Lukes (1975), who thinks Bachrach and Baratz do not rely on it enough, false consciousness has been rejected by almost everyone as untestable in principle.

C. Explication of the central terms in Bachrach and Baratz's theory.

Our purpose is to render the terms in Bachrach and Baratz's theory more precise, and to rid them of pejorative evaluations and the appeal to causes and effects which makes them circular. To accomplish the required definitions, we assume quite conventional concepts of what a decision is,

i.e., a choice among alternatives, and what a collective decision is, i.e., an authoritative decision, however arrived at, that binds all members of a group, independent of their individual preferences. (Collective decisions, for our purposes, can be made by any kind of mechanism whatever--dictatorship, committee, majority vote, unanimous consensus or any other binding procedure.) The set of all issues to be decided by this procedure is the group's political agenda. The simplest agenda consists of one issue and the simplest issue consists of one set of mutually exclusive, independent alternatives. Thus simple agendas can be completely described by the set of alternatives, or policies, among which the group will decide. A more complex issue is a composite of several independently decidable simple issues. In this case, the idea of an agenda requires the additional notion that some order is imposed on the several subissues, i.e., they are to be taken up in some predetermined sequence. However, this idea, which is central in studies of the effects the agenda has on the outcomes of collective decisionmaking (Cohen, et al., 1978; Fiorina and Plott, 1978; Levine and Plott, 1977, Plott and Levine, 1978; Plott and Rogerson, 1979) plays no role in our attempt to explicate Bachrach and Baratz. Actual agendas, of course, will often consist of more than one issue, again in some order that is irrelevant for present purposes.

The agenda is merely one stage in the process by which a group decides on a policy. We take the simplified variant of Bachrach and Baratz's model of the policy process in figures 1a and 1b to adequately describe the stages in the process as a whole. The "stages" of this model are not necessarily temporally distinct. They are simply analytic distinctions referring to various aspects of the process and arranged in

logical order--logical in the sense that one cannot specify an issue one has not recognized, cannot decide an issue one has not decided to decide, etc. But all of them could occur almost instantaneously, from a temporal point of view, and any stage can be retraced any number of times once the process begins. All that part of the process which ends in an agenda we will refer to as the metadecision stage of the process, i.e., the stage in which decisions are made about decisions; deciding what to decide is what predecision politics is essentially about.

The progress of an issue to decision, described by figure 2, begins with the recognition that something is a "problem" about which the group, as a group, should do something. To decide what might be done requires specification of the issue, i.e., conceiving alternative solutions, their possible outcomes, and the relations between these two. The agenda selects some at least of the possible policies as the "issue" which must be decided, and it is this issue, as defined by the agenda, that is in fact the framework for collective decision. The elements that survive at each stage of the process form, in a sense, its positive outcomes. At this point, like Bachrach and Baratz, we require some idea of issueness if we are to define the meaning of its negative outcomes. We take the liberty of presuming a solution exists to the question of what makes some state of affairs an issue, a question dealt with (at length) below. If we assume we have something we know to be an issue, obviously the simplest way to define a nondecision is to recognize that at any stage of the process (including the decision stage) there is always the possibility of doing nothing (cf Dahl, 1957, p. 209). At the identification stage an issue may simply not be recognized, or it may be seen as only a private matter. At the specification stage some alternative may simply not be

considered. At the agenda stage agenda gatekeepers may decide not to decide an issue or, what comes to the same thing, may simply not decide to decide it. Thus,

DEFINITION 1. A nondecision is any outcome of a metadecision process such that

- (1) there is an issue in the polity, that
- (2) the polity has not decided to decide.

We call attention again to the fact that there are two ways that a nondecision can occur. A group can actually decide not to decide an issue. Or it can simply not decide to decide it. In the latter case, there may be no visible decision to point to as a nondecision, but providing the first part of the definition is satisfied, i.e., the issue meets some standard (to be provided below) of issueness, then it makes no difference whether or not an explicit decision is made to not consider the issue. Most of the special features of the metadecisionmaking process arise from this fact.

The definition of a nondecision obviously depends for its usefulness on a definition of the term "issue." The definition of "issue" is complicated by shifts that tend to occur in the sense of the term at different stages of the policy process. At the earliest stage of the process, when what is in question is recognition of the issue, the term will often be used to mean that someone has identified a "problem" that they feel calls for group decision. The word "problem", in turn, will usually mean that there is some disparity between an existing state of affairs and some person's preferences. The problem may be quite vaguely defined, the person recognizing it having little idea what might be done about it, hence what alternatives an agenda might consider. As the "problem" comes to be

defined, i.e., the issue comes to be specified further, it will acquire much greater definition: Alternative courses of action will be conceived, their outcomes identified, information will be sought and some will be provided about the relation between each alternative and the various possible outcomes of a decision. Possibly, though not necessarily, people will acquire some goals or objectives in terms of which they can decide which alternatives are preferred; in any case, they will form preferences for the various alternatives based on preferences for the outcomes to which they are relevant. In this stage, the word "issue" tends to mean "controversy", i.e., a matter with respect to which different people have different preference orders for different possible policies. In both senses of the word, it is usually assumed that the issue has not yet been authoritatively decided; even if one disagrees with the outcome of a collective decision, one does not refer to it as still an "issue" unless one does not accept the decision as authoritative. To create an "issue" it will also be necessary that policies ordered by the members ~~members~~ are mutually exclusive. If they are not, obviously no choice is required.

In order to define an "issue", therefore, one must be able to characterize people by their preference-ordering for different policies. One can think of such preference orders in more or less the usual way: the outcomes of each possible policy must have some kind of value for people affected by them which induces a preference order on the outcomes; the preference order on the outcomes, in turn, induces one on the alternatives linked to them. (We can neglect the probabilistic case because it affects only the kind of decision rule employed, which is irrelevant to defining an issue for present purposes.) To define the difference between two such preference orders we obviously require some notion of

their similarity. We will say that two preference orders are the same if and only if they are made up of the same policies in the same order. This implies, for example, not only that $x > y > z$ is different from $x < y < z$, it is also different from $x > y$. Thus, it is sufficient to make nuclear arms policy an issue if one segment of the community prefers unilateral nuclear disarmament while another does not even consider the alternative a possibility to be debated. Indifference among alternatives we will count as a preference order that is consistent with every other preference order--hence, raises no issue. However, this way of thinking about the difference between two preference orders does not require that every alternative be well-defined. For example, $x > \bar{x}$ is a different preference order from $x < \bar{x}$, without \bar{x} having to be a well-defined policy in the minds of the actor. Thus, the desire for something, anything, different from present policy is a meaningfully different preference order. This will be true even if every member of the polity shares the same preference order. The difference that makes an "issue" is, in this case, the difference between $x > \bar{x}$, implicit in the existing policy x , and the order $\bar{x} > x$ preferred by dissenting members of the polity. We will therefore define an issue as:²

DEFINITION 2. A present (or prospective) state of affairs is an issue in a polity if and only if

- (1) there are two or more distinct preference orders for the outcomes of a collective decision,
- (2) the outcomes ordered by these preferences are mutually exclusive,
- (3) and policy has not been authoritatively decided in the minds of those who have a stake in the outcome.

Note, of course, that covert issues are still issues by this definition. It also implies that the reshaping of issues in the course of debate is nondecisionmaking just as much as complete suppression of an issue is. (This, of course, is consistent with Bachrach and Baratz, as it is intended to be.) The "shape" of an issue can be described in terms of (1) how "political" it is seen to be (as opposed to how "private" it is); (2) the set of alternatives considered, and (3) the set of outcomes perceived as the consequences of these alternatives. Thus, one individual may see health care as a technical issue and think of it in terms of costs, efficiencies, and effectiveness. Another may define it in terms of changes in the relations between the private and public sector, hence define the issue in terms of private vs social medicine. Still others may not even consider national health insurance among the possible alternatives. We will use the term "issue" throughout to mean a specific ordering of specific alternatives and outcomes, hence modifying in any way the alternatives or the outcomes considered counts as a redefinition or reshaping of the issue.

One can describe positions on an issue by describing the distribution and intensity of these preferences in a population. Its "issueness" is a question of the scope and intensity of these preferences. But preferences are purely subjective and subjective preferences are unobservable. Thus, definitions 1 and 2 may make the concept of a nondecision more precise, but unless an independent test of issueness is found it is still incapable of figuring in testable theories. If an issue is not on a polity's agenda, what ground is there for inferring that it is an issue?

Definitions 1 and 2 imply that nondecisions are essentially counterfactual agendas--issues that, in the absence of some countervailing

factor would have been on the polity's agenda. What has to be shown is that, other things being equal, the issue would have emerged. The comparative method is the conventional solution to such problems (and is used in the nondecision literature, for example, by Crenson, 1971 and Smith, 1979). Comparing otherwise similar polities, a variable X can be said to cause a nondecision if and only if the issue is present when X is absent. It may be difficult to accomplish the comparison: Polities have to be equated both for factors relevant to the creation and formulation of issues and for otherwise extraneous factors correlated with the behavior of the polity. But in principle there is nothing mystical about the inference that needs to be made. The operational definition of a nondecision depends on:

CRITERION 1: An issue not on a polity's agenda is a nondecision if and only if, in the absence of some identifiable factor X, the issue is on the agenda of otherwise similar polities.

The syntax of the rule is slightly tortured because it provides a rule identifying a state (nondecision) rather than the factor that causes it (X). A deceptive consequence is that the syntax emphasizes a negative test (the absence of X). Its most important implication is in fact more positive: What one is really looking at is not something called the "nondecisionmaking process" but rather the metadecisionmaking process as a whole. To refer to the process one is studying as the "nondecision" process, as Bachrach and Baratz often do, means one is not looking at positive outcomes--an error the mirror opposite of the one Bachrach and Baratz criticized in formulating the concept in the first place. Just as Bachrach and Baratz underlined the unity of the entire policy process, Criterion 1 underlines the unity of the metadecision process. The positive

outcomes (agendas) and the negative outcomes (nondecisions) cannot be studied as two separate kinds of process, they are inseparably part of the one process. Thus, research on "nondecisionmaking" cannot focus solely on factors suppressing an issue and cannot be concerned with nondecisions per se.

If "nondecisions" were ambiguous, circular, and value-loaded, "mobilization of bias" is more so. The solution, however, is simpler to arrive at. Going back to its origins in Schattschneider, the term "bias" referred to inequalities in the allocation of values and in participation in making policy and rules. It gradually acquired the meaning, in addition, of a "bias" in the mechanisms that operated to allocate these values, hence, in the end, also of the values, rules, practices and procedures that operated to create and maintain these mechanisms. Only if one assumes, as Bachrach and Baratz do, that all these form a single monolithic structure can one refer to all this by the one concept. But what is at work, clearly, is the legitimation process, and what Bachrach and Baratz (and Schattschneider) think is the key to that process is the system of values, beliefs, rules, practices and procedures to be found in a society. Hence, without attempting a formal definition of the expression (despite our frequent use of it in part III), we will simply use the term to refer to "legitimacy", and follow Bachrach and Baratz in thinking of legitimacy as created by the existing values, beliefs, norms and practices of a society.

III. Testing Bachrach and Baratz's theory: The Politics of the Suppression of issues.

Our purpose in part III is to construct a specific technique, based on the method of observation and inference proposed in part II, that meets

the strictest possible standard of internal validity and to employ it to test seven hypotheses implied by Bachrach and Baratz's theory.

A. Scope of This Investigation.

Throughout, we test this theory under the following conditions: First, the groups we study are engaged in collective, interdependent tasks and have a procedure capable of making authoritative, collective decisions. Second, we focus throughout on the agenda stage of the policy process. In some sense, we are concerned with the mobilization of resources; what the agendas are about is a change the costs of which are to be born by members of the group. But the focus is on the point at which a member of the group initiates an agenda. Third, all the agendas we study are member-initiated. In this we follow Bachrach and Baratz, but it should be emphasized that the agenda of any group can arise in a number of other ways. Some issues arise exogenously--not only in the sense that they are about the external environment of the group but also in the sense that the external environment establishes a group's agenda. (Meyer, for example, emphasizes how many features of educational and political systems arise not because they serve any purpose from the point of view of the group itself but because external sources of support and resources think a group legitimate only if it has such features. See, particularly, Meyer, 1977). Some issues arise endogenously, but out of the routines evolved by the group for accomplishing its purposes and sustaining its existence. Thus, Polsby (1971) distinguishes inside from outside initiatives on the basis of a distinction between governmental vs nongovernmental sources of an issue and Cobb, et al., (1976) make this distinction the basis for three distinct models of agenda-setting. In Polsby's language, we are concerned in the present investigation only with "outside" initiatives. However,

"outside" is slightly ambiguous: From the perspective of the literature on social movements, we are entirely concerned with "insiders'" politics. Although we study challenges, there are no "outsiders" in our groups in the sense of persons without legitimate access to the polity. Fourth, we study n-person, mixed-motive conflicts. In this respect, we depart sharply from Bachrach and Baratz, whose definition of a nondecision commits them to a dyadic conflict model. The way in which we have redefined the term makes no such a priori commitment. This is not because we think such conflicts never occur. But as a starting point they neglect too much. The principal application Bachrach and Baratz make of their theory is to the politics of communities. In effect, what their assumption does is focus entirely on the distributive aspects of a community's politics. They treat polities as if they either had no corporate existence or all agents of that corporate existence were coopted by economic elites. Possibly some communities have no corporate existence and possibly some polities are coopted by economic elites, but both characteristics vary across polities. Furthermore, with respect specifically to the distributive aspects of politics they also assume that every single individual is in some way affected by every redistributive issue which seems to us much too strong. Only in the limit would one expect to find no disinterested parties to a conflict. Thus, the redistributive issue that we create in the laboratory makes room for a mixture of cooperative as well as competitive and disinterested as well as interested motives.

B. Techniques of Investigation.

Any weight given to "realism" may seem odd in an investigation that creates redistributive issues in the laboratory. But one purpose of our method is to achieve the highest possible standard of internal validity.

Nonexperimental comparisons such as Crenson (1971) or Smith (1979) obviously satisfy the criterion laid down in part II. But even comparative studies have been plagued by serious difficulties of internal validity. These difficulties are essentially the same as those pointed out by Snyder (1979) in studies of collective violence. Polsby (1980, Ch. 11), for example, has criticized Crenson, the exemplar for this kind of study, because he arbitrarily assumes that objective conditions can have only one subjective meaning--which is exactly like trying to infer relative deprivation from changes in GNP. Snyder (1979) identifies the problems of such inferences as due partly to inferring cross-level effects from measures at only the aggregate level, partly to inferring process from cross-sectional causal models, and partly to the numerous factors incorporated into aggregated indicators besides the concepts they are taken to indicate. Crenson, for example, was in the fortunate position of having an objective measure of pollution. Holding other relevant factors constant, he found that as the particulate level in the air increased the issueness of pollution increased. But holding the particulate level constant, as concentration of economic power increased the issueness of pollution decreased. Crenson inferred that the issue had been suppressed. Polsby objected that Crenson was in no position to rule out the rival hypothesis that the populations of such communities do not want pollution ordinances because they trade off clean air for employment and commercial opportunities. However objective the measure of air pollution is, issueness is a subjective state of mind. There is no warrant for directly inferring issueness from any objective indicator; other factors, correlated with but distinct from both the objective measure and the hypothetical suppressant, may also determine the meaning of the indicator.

A method by which a stricter standard of internal validity can be achieved is experimentation. Our objective in using this method is to create an unambiguous instance of a redistributive issue that no one can claim is not "really" an issue. To accomplish this requires the capacity to manipulate the conditions that create an issue, to control (or to randomize) the effects of factors that might confound its interpretation, and to almost completely control the conditions of its observation.

To create a redistributive issue in a laboratory setting, rewards are distributed inequitably to groups having the capacity to change the structure that creates the inequity: Five-member teams are required to solve ten (independent) problems the solution to each of which depends on coordinating information distributed to members at the beginning of the problem in such a way that each has some but no one has all the information required to solve it. Subjects (S's) work in separate rooms, communicating by written messages only. Messages can pass only to those other members of the team linked to S by "open" channels of communication (from Bavelas, 1950). All teams start in the most highly centralized network possible, called the "wheel". (See figure 2A.)

(FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE)

This structure has one central and four peripheral positions. The central position can communicate directly with all the others, but all the others communicate only with (or through) the center. The central position is also materially advantaged: although each S gets some share of the team's total earnings, which depend on the number of correct solutions to each problem, there is also a bonus paid on each problem to the member who first reports the correct solution to the experimenter (E). (The value of this bonus equals the value of the team's earnings

on one problem if all its solutions are correct.) It will of course always be earned by the central position. To underline the inequity of this, S's are told early in their instructions that all of them are alike and were allocated to their positions by chance. But a team is allowed to add more channels of communication if it is willing to pay a small cost, to be shared by all members (Mackenzie, 1976). An all-to-all network, for example, (shown in figure 2B), would equalize opportunity to win a bonus. To add more channels, a majority of the group must agree. An "election", to decide the issue, is held by E if a member of the group (1) proposes a specific agenda and (2) obtains a second by one other member. Thus, from the point of view of any given disadvantaged (peripheral) member, the problem is to mobilize the resources of his peers to accomplish a change that restores equity. From the point of view of any given advantaged (central) member, the problem is to suppress the issue--a capacity within his powers because he controls communication. No election is actually held: each S is stopped and interviewed at the point at which a proposal to change the structure is first made or endorsed. Where required, S is placed in E's "office" where, in addition to responsibility for calculating team earnings and allocating the bonus, S is asked to function as an agenda gatekeeper. In any one experiment, S's are placed in only one position in this structure; all other positions play roles pre-programmed by E, so that each of the roles in the process can be studied for given conditions of their joint relationship. Hence, we have two kinds of studies to report, one concerned with how powerful beneficiaries behave (Section C below) and the other with how less powerful and deprived actors behave (Section D below).

In all experiments using these methods, a "baseline" condition measures the magnitude of the pressure created by the inequitable allocation of the bonus to change the structure of the communication network. Other things being equal, almost half the S's in the "peripheral" positions of the wheel have tried to get another member of the group to endorse a proposal to change the structure of the communication network by the end of the third problem (or "trial" of the experiment). By the end of the tenth trial, 30% of S's have responded in this way, which is referred to as a "change-", or simply "C-", response. (Figure 3 shows the distribution of such responses in the form of a survival curve, i.e. the percentage surviving at the end of each trial of the experiment.) A disinterested agenda gatekeeper, placed in the "office" of the experiment, will endorse such an agenda 95% of the time. (See table 1 below.)

(FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE)

But what is the cost to external validity of this kind of method? In general, an answer to this kind of question depends on the purpose to which an experiment is addressed. The purpose of an experiment is to test an abstract, general, explanatory hypothesis (cf Zelditch, 1969); it should be understood that that is the purpose of the present investigation--it is not our purpose to say anything descriptive about metadecisionmaking in particular, concrete communities. Given our purpose, standards of external validity applied to experiments are the same as those applied to generalizing from nonexperimental investigations. Generalization from any instance to any other depends on successfully abstracting the relevant variables common to both. There are two ways in which external validity in this sense can fail: The theory employed can fail because of specification errors, i.e. it may omit some

relevant variable; or one (or both) of the instances may not be valid instances of the theory. In the case of experiments, specification errors may themselves be of two kinds. The theory tested may omit an important factor which is therefore not incorporated into the experimental setting employed to test it. Or the theory fails to recognize the significance of an important factor which is incorporated into the setting used to test it, treating as theoretically irrelevant factors that actually determine the outcome. Of particular importance in guiding the construction of an experimental setting is the precise theoretical specification of the nature of the relations between variables. Since very often the effects produced by experiments in the laboratory occur during short periods of time at low levels of involvement through small ranges of the theoretically relevant variables, one's theory must assure one that the process is merely magnified, but not changed in form, over longer periods, in more involving conditions, at more extreme values of the same variables. This is, of course, the standard kind of objection to experiments in sociology. But it is important to understand that what does not matter is the fact that an experiment will not match the descriptive generalizations made about natural settings. That is precisely what they are created not to do. Generalizing the result of any experiment (or, for that matter, any non experiment) is conditional. Extrapolating it to a natural setting is possible if and only if precisely the same initial and scope conditions are reproduced by the natural setting. The experiment guarantees only the relation "if x, then y," never the fact of x in a natural setting. It is because of this that one should not, except for occasional and unpredictable accidents, directly extrapolate the results of any one experiment to any concrete

natural setting. The function of the experiment is to inform the experimenter about an aspect of a theory. It will never test the whole theoretical formulation, because its entire function is to isolate and manipulate particular parts of the theory while controlling other parts of it. The proper way to relate an experiment to a natural setting, therefore, is to apply the theory to which it is relevant to the natural setting. Failures of external validity are therefore as often failures of theory as they are failures of validity. In assessing the external validity of the present experiments, what one wants to look for are first of all the success with which the experiment creates the variables abstracted by the theory. In case the obvious needs explicit statement, note that application of the theory to natural settings is both an important criterion of its utility and one not guaranteed by experiment.

C. Studies in the causes of the mobilization of bias.

In Bachrach and Baratz's theory the principle behavior of the "haves" is the mobilization of bias to delay or prevent challenges from reaching the agenda for decision. This behavior includes two kinds of events, making new rules and invoking existing ones. The theory treats the invoking of existing rules as a multiplicative interaction between interest and legitimacy (given power). Failing an interest, there is nothing impelling an actor to use the rules. Failing legitimacy, there are no rules to invoke. In the latter case, assuming the power of the actor to make rules, a different model of the mobilization of bias predicts his behavior: The mobilization of bias will lead to the elaboration of the given system of rules for the purpose of justifying the interests of the powerful. In either case, given a vested interest there are strong pressures to prevent change by making it counternorma-

tive. Lacking such an interest, there are no pressures either to use or to make rules.

To test this model, 33 male, undergraduate, paid volunteers were seated in a room labelled "office", where they were instructed to tabulate the number of correct solutions, team earnings, and bonuses for a team at work in the setting described in section B. They were also given responsibility for deciding whether to hold an election or not if members wished to rent more channels of communication. Thus, the office held veto power over any agenda for change. A confederate sent a proposal for change (to an all-to-all network) on the third trial of the experiment. A "change-response" in this experiment consists of endorsement of this proposal by the agenda gatekeeper.

In the baseline condition of the experiment, S was paid a flat fee for his participation. Under this condition, 95% of S's made a C-response (see the first row of table 1). A vested interest in the existing structure was created, in a second condition, by making S's rewards depend on how much the central position earned. More exactly, S's were told that introducing a bonus complicated the problem of paying the office, but they would be paid an amount equal to the highest individual earnings in the work team. This substantially decreased C-responses; only 60% of S's endorsed the confederate's proposal to change to an all-to-all network in this condition. Legitimacy was created, in a third condition, by allowing S to hear instructions given by E to the work team explaining that it would damage the objectives of the experiment if members changed the existing structure before the eighth problem because it took that long before the behavior being studied in the experiment could be reliably measured. Like S's in the

baseline condition, these S's were paid a flat fee for participation and had no vested interest in the kind of communication system used by the work team. Under these conditions, only 35% of S's made a C-response. That the legitimacy effect is stronger than the interest effect is not informative, because the

(TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE)

two manipulations are arbitrarily sampled points from two multi-valued variables; other values of these variables, had they been sampled instead, would have produced stronger (or weaker) effects. What is significant is that legitimacy has an effect that does not depend on interest. An even more clear evidence of the independence of legitimacy from interest is shown by the fourth condition of the experiment, in which interest and legitimacy combine to reduce the level of C-responses to 15% (see the last row of table 1). Legitimacy and interest are evidently additive, not interactive. The rate of change is the lowest of the four conditions, of course, but is no lower than one would predict simply by adding the effect of legitimacy to that of interest.

Justification for this conclusion rests on the "logit analysis" shown in the right-hand columns of table 1. Logit analysis is basically linear regression with a dichotomous dependent variable. The "parameters" shown in column 5 are logs of the ratio of the proportion of change-responses to the proportion resisting change. The parameter for the interaction effect is not significantly different from zero.⁴

What these results imply is that legitimacy has an effect on the behavior of the agenda gatekeepers whether or not there is any self-interested motive for "mobilizing" it and the effect it has is the same whether there is an interest or not--i.e. the existence of a

vested interest does not multiply the legitimacy effect. This is not the kind of proposition which one accepts or rejects on the basis of a single experiment; but the experiment does give one reason to doubt Bachrach and Baratz's reduction of legitimacy to a purely material basis.

D. Studies in the effects of "the mobilization of bias."

In this section we consider six hypotheses deriving from Bachrach and Baratz that have to do with the effects, as distinct from the causes, of the mobilization of bias. These effects are of three kinds: direct effects of legitimacy on the acceptance of, and hence voluntary compliance with, a normative order; indirect effects of the acceptance by others of a normative order as legitimate; and direct effects of the authority conferred by legitimacy, which, by justifying the collective mobilization of members' resources, concentrates the power required to enforce unwilling compliance with a normative order on those who do not accept it.

To study these effects, S's were put in the peripheral positions of the centralized network shown in figure 2A. The results of six experiments with various ways of manipulating the legitimacy of a normative order or its authority are displayed in table 2. The first line in the body of this table shows the result of a direct attempt to make inequality appear legitimate, i.e. equitable. To accomplish this, E informed S's that all of them had been randomly allocated to positions in the network except for the central person, who had been specially chosen (on the basis of previous experiment) for superior ability at the task. In the baseline condition of this experiment, 95% of S's made a C-response some time during the experiment. In the equity

condition, only 62% did. Thus, one might say that a third of the change observed in the baseline condition was suppressed by legitimating inequality. The observed proportion of C-responses, however, is a seriously misleading statistic. It does not distinguish faster from slower rates of change, differences which are observable only by displaying entire survival curves (as in figure 3). The same is true of the mean or median of these curves. What table 2 shows, therefore, is a statistic that more precisely reflects the differences in shape of the two survival curves being compared. It is based on the ratio of the relative rates of change in the equity treatment compared to its baseline condition,⁵ and can be read "the percent of change in the baseline condition that is delayed or prevented by the treatment in the experimental condition." It is adapted from a statistic used to evaluate clinical trials in medical experiments. By this measure, the justification of inequality by E delayed or prevented 63% of the change found in the baseline condition. (Lineweber, et al, 1980).

An even stronger effect was produced simply by labelling the issue illegitimate. This was done by making S's believe that it would damage the objectives of the experiment if a change were actually made. S's were told that E was interested in the "detailed pattern of information flow" in communication networks of various kinds, that this pattern did not stabilize, and therefore could not be reliably measured, before the eighth problem, and that E would return at the end of the eighth problem in order to measure this flow. This delayed or prevented 67% of the change observed in the baseline (Thomas, et al, 1980).

As one might expect, making change politically impossible eliminated it completely. What we were trying to create, in this case, is some-

thing like the facticity of a normative order that Bachrach and Baratz, like Berger and Luckmann, believe it acquires by being upheld by others. Whether or not any given individual accepts the legitimacy of an order, that it comes to be embodied in everyone's conduct gives it an unquestioned reality that makes other possibilities vanish. Not only does "how it is done" become a fact of nature instead of a fallible human creation, hence unthinkable as a "political" issue, but it breaks well-beaten paths that channel behavior as effectively as if the paths not there were actual barriers. To make change politically impossible, we eliminated the rental procedure. The only difficulty was to devise a dependent variable comparable to that in the baseline. For this purpose we observed individualistic as well as collective change-responses. Adding more channels of communication is a response to inequity that requires collective mobilization of resources. Some S's in all our experiments find this a "hassle" and, instead, attempt directly to negotiate a share of the bonus on an individual basis or withhold, or send false, information. (The proportion of change-responses that is individualistic varies from experiment to experiment. We do not study it here because it does not bear on Bachrach and Baratz's theory.) However, to make the responses in all six experiments comparable we include both individualistic and collective change-responses in all the results shown in Table 2. The political impossibility of change delayed or prevented 43% of changes (of all kinds) observed in the baseline. More important, no S in the experimental condition thought of the possibility of collectively changing the structure of the system of communication. All of the suppressed change was due to the difference in collective change-responses; the rate of individualistic change-responses was about the same in both

conditions. Or, put another way, the political impossibility of change did not seem to substantially increase private grievances (Thomas, et al, 1981).

The effect of legitimacy in Bachrach and Baratz does not depend on S's own beliefs in the legitimacy of a normative order. The beliefs of others play a central role in delaying or preventing change. In fact, although they do not use the term or even the idea, what Dornbusch and Scott call the "validity" of a normative order is sufficient (Dornbusch and Scott, 1975). Validity means essentially the existence of a binding normative order, as opposed to S's personal belief that it is right (which Dornbusch and Scott refer to as the order's propriety). Validity has the effect of inducing others to support such an order and inducing any particular individual to expect that other others will support it. In the equity experiment referred to in the second paragraph of this section, for example, post-session interviews found that S's did not personally believe in the legitimacy of the inequality created by the experiment. They felt the task was too simple to require much ability, hence did not see how the central position's superior ability could matter. But they did not attempt to change the structure of the communication system because they felt that, in an experiment, rules made by and beliefs held by E were valid, hence binding on them. Furthermore, they felt that in some sense E's authority backed the normative order (Lineweber, et al, 1980). Borrowing again from Dornbusch and Scott, we have found it a useful elaboration of Bachrach and Baratz to be more specific about who supports an order, hence to distinguish between "endorsement" and "authorization" of the validity of an order.

By endorsement is meant the support of a normative order by others like S. By authorization is meant the support of a normative order by others more powerful than S. Authorization, as we will see in a moment, has a stronger effect than endorsement but endorsement is a critical factor, nevertheless, in the mobilization of revolutionary coalitions (see Lawler, 1975 Michener and Durt, 1975, Michener and Lawler, 1971, Michener and Lyons, 1972). To study its effects, a short questionnaire was administered after one practice trial, the (fictitious) results of which were fed back to S's who were told that four of the five members of the group felt that the wheel was the most appropriate and most efficient way to organize the group for its task. This had the effect of delaying or preventing 49% of the change found in the baseline (Walker, 1979 Walker and Smith-Donals, 1981 Walker et al., 1981).

To study the effects of authorized power, E gave the central position the power to decide, as it saw fit, how to divide team earnings. Although Bachrach and Baratz discuss power a good deal, and have what we believe to be one of the better analyses of its different forms (1963 1970, ch.2), it is important to keep in mind that what they are talking about is almost never pure power. They are almost always talking about power backed by legitimating values, rules, beliefs, practices and procedures. The importance of this, in their analysis (as in many others), is that it confers the capacity to mobilize collective resources which, once assembled, concentrates sufficient power to back rules by sanctions. It is, therefore, not necessary that any particular individual accept the propriety of an order if he is aware that it is authorized, hence backed by the assembled resources of the community. What E did by delegating the right to divide team earnings to the center was therefore to authorize its power, in the Dornbusch-Scott sense. But, following Bachrach and Baratz, what we were

concerned with was the more invisible ways in which this power might operate to delay or prevent change. Their analysis rests on two ideas: That potential power is as or more more important than actual power and operates to produce its effects through the "law of anticipated reactions" (Friedrich, 1963). E therefore informed S that past experience showed that the person in the central position preferred centralized communication networks and almost always used his power to prevent change. The expected value of his sanction, had it been used, was greater than the expected value of the gain S would derive from a change, but the central position neither used nor threatened to use any actual sanctions. The reactions anticipated by S nevertheless delayed or prevented 60% of the change found in the baseline (Ford, 1931). Virtually the same effect, however, was found when S had no clear idea what the person in the central position preferred or how likely he was to deploy the sanctions he controlled. Uncertainty about the central position's preferences was created by informing S that, based on past experiments one could not tell how the person in the central position would behave because some factors led him to prefer the wheel (such as the responsibility) but some led him to prefer a change (such as the inequality). Uncertainty about the position's preferences delayed or prevented 58% of the change found in the baseline (Zelditch and Ford, 1930).⁶

IV. Conclusions.

The first conclusion to draw from these experiments is that legitimacy is not reducible to a purely material basis. No one experiment is sufficient evidence against a whole way of thought and we did not even try to test the theory of norm-formation that is at the heart of this way

of thought, but we found no evidence to support the hypothesis that the "mobilization of bias" depends on a vested interest. The same "bias" was mobilized without such an interest and its effect was independent of the existence of such an interest.

But, second, the evidence clearly supported all six of the hypotheses tested about the effects Bachrach and Baratz claim that the "mobilization of bias" has on the mobilization of discontent. If the existing system of inequality was justified by a legitimate source, if an issue would clearly damage legitimate objectives, if change was politically impossible, if peers endorsed the existing system, if authorized powers preferred it, or even if the preferences of such powers were uncertain but they could do serious damage--all these conditions delayed or prevented change.

A third conclusion one can draw from these experiments is that Bachrach and Baratz seem if anything to have understated the features that make metadecisions and nondecisions special. What makes a meta-decision different from a decision is that one of its alternatives is to do nothing. A decision is a choice among possible policies: if one chooses a policy x one at the same time rejects a policy y and, whichever of the two one chooses, the outcome is a visible commitment to some policy. A metadecision is a choice between doing something and doing nothing, but to do nothing may or may not be a visible commitment. There are two distinct ways of doing nothing: one can decide not to decide something, such as tabling a motion, or one can simply not decide to decide, evading the issue altogether. The significance of the difference between the two kinds of nondecision is that it makes nondecisions in an important sense beyond compliance. For the most part, Bachrach and Baratz reason from specifically anticipated reactions to specifically compliant

actions. But compliance isn't required to nondecide an issue. Doing nothing is as likely to occur when the preferences of the powerful are uncertain. In this respect, the legitimacy of power works in much the same way as the legitimacy of a normative order. As Bachrach and Baratz would have predicted, we found that norms do not depend for their effect on their acceptance by any particular individual. 'Acceptance' is a collective, not an individual process, and the acceptance of a normative order by some suffices to mobilize collective resources behind its enforcement on those who do not accept it. In other words, it is sufficient that a normative order exist. In the same way, the sheer existence of a power structure, over and above any specifically anticipated reactions is sufficient to nondecide an issue.

What emerges from these experiments is a somewhat more thoroughgoing structuralism than Bachrach and Baratz's. Bachrach and Baratz's theory is "structural" in the sense that issueness depends neither on the correlation between individual discontent and collective action, on the one hand, nor on the correlation between individual acceptance of rules and compliance with them on the other. It is the social distribution of resources (including access) operating through the dual mobilization of A and B, not discontent, that determines challenge and the existence of a normative order in the system as a whole, not the beliefs of particular actors, that determines nondecisions. But their structural approach breaks down at two crucial points: they mean "mobilization" of bias quite literally, thinking throughout in terms of specific, concrete acts by A, that have a centrally coordinated, intended outcome. And the effects of this bias are often thought of as event-specific, as motivated compliance by B with the specific wishes of A. What one sees in our experiments is

somewhat different: Nothing in our research speaks to the question of how a structure emerges, but once it emerges its operation does not depend on concrete suppression by A nor concrete compliance by B. Nondecisions are as much the outcome of the structure of the AB relation as of A's intentions or B's anticipations. The mobilization of bias arises as much from the existence of a normative order as it does from any specific acts by A, its effects on B arise from the collective acceptance of that order, not acceptance by any particular B, and the effects of authorized power arise as much from the sheer existence of a structure of power as from the anticipation of concrete reactions by B. Hence, it does not require a conspiracy by A to mobilize bias and its effects do not depend on how the rules were made. Nondecisions are as much the outcome of the way a system is organized as of concrete actions by particular actors.

FOOTNOTES

¹Bachrach and Baratz did not actually define 'nondecisionmaking' explicitly until Power and Poverty and even then they gave two conflicting definitions of it. Hence, any discussion of the concept must reconstruct their meaning from the surrounding commentary and their methods of reasoning.

²We define "issueness" in terms of outcomes and do not try to clarify further the meaning of differences among alternative ways of achieving any given outcome although we recognize that "issues" arise with respect to procedure and/or strategy also. For the sake of simplicity, two strategies that yield the same outcome are formally equivalent. What often causes problems for such an analysis are multi-attribute outcomes, i.e., outcomes that can be ranked according to two or more dimensions. Hence, what creates issues are often different evaluations of various trade-offs possible among different policies. For our purposes, different orderings of the different aspects of an outcome create an issue.

³The baseline rate of change in a sixth baseline, part of an experiment in which change was made politically impossible, was significantly lower than the pooled average shown in figure 3, reflecting the effects of inflation on the amount of money at stake in the experiment.

⁴A more detailed analysis shows that, if anything, the interaction of interest and legitimacy produces less change than would be predicted by adding their independent effects, an important result that we do not pause to explain because it adds nothing to the test of Bachrach and Baratz's theory. See Zelditch, et al., 1981.

⁵The essential feature of methods for treating survival curves is that observed change is compared to expected change at each trial (or period), which in turn depends only on the number exposed to risk at the beginning of each trial. If m S's make a C-response at trial t and a proportion p of all S's were in condition i when trial t began, then the expected number of C-responses in condition i should be $p_i m$, assuming there is no true difference between conditions. The quantity $r_i = \frac{O_i}{E_i}$, the ratio of the observed to the expected number of change-responses, gives the relative rate of change in the i th condition, i.e., the rate of change in the i th condition compared to that in the population as a whole. The quantity $R = \frac{r_i}{r_j}$ gives the ratio of the relative rate of change in the i th condition to that in the j th condition--reflecting the shape of the two curves because the expected values are computed trial by trial and are based on the numbers surviving up to the time each trial begins. The quantity $S = 1 - R$ provides essentially the same information, but has a more natural interpretation in the present case as the "suppression" rate, i.e., the rate at which change in the baseline is delayed or prevented by any given experimental treatment. The statistic $(O - E)^2/E$, furthermore, is distributed as chi square with (in this case) 1 df, which is the basis for the significance levels in the notes to table 2. For a comprehensive survey of methods of analyzing survival curves, see Elandt-Johnson and Johnson, 1980. An especially clear and nontechnical treatment, based on the (nonparametric) "logrank" statistic which is used here, can be found in Peto, et al., 1977.

6 Two explanations of this result seemed plausible: That the situation was so obviously to the center's advantage that many S's still believed he would prefer it, despite the instruction by E; or that under uncertainty S's minimize the worst that could happen by doing nothing. (Cf any game-theoretic discussion of the minimax principle.) A survey of an independent sample drawn from the same population found that if the situation were stripped of all cues from which to infer preferences, but there was still a good deal at stake, over half the respondents predicted that anyone else (though not they themselves) would do nothing, playing it safe. (See Zelditch and Ford, 1980.)

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Table 1. Proportion of change-responses made by agenda gatekeepers under various conditions of interest and legitimacy.

Condition	N	Proportion of change-responses	Statistics of the Logit analysis				
			Effect	Parameter*	Chi Square	df	Probability
Baseline	20	.95	Grand Mean	0.29	0.75	1	n.s.
Interest	20	.60	Interest	-0.96	8.00	1	p < .005
Legitimacy	23	.35	Legitimacy	-1.38	16.64	1	p < .001
Interaction	20	.15	Interaction	0.31	0.85	1	n.s.

* These estimates are the logs of the ratio of the proportion endorsing to the proportion not endorsing change.

Source: Zelditch, et al., 1981.

Table 2. Per cent of the baseline rate of change initiated by peripheral positions that is delayed or prevented by various manipulations of legitimacy and power.^a

Experimental Condition	N	Per cent of baseline rate of change delayed or prevented ^b
Inequality is justified by differences in relative contributions to the task	21	63%**
Change would damage the objectives of the experiment	31	67%**
Collective change is politically impossible	20	43%
Peers believe that the existing structure of the communication system is appropriate	40 ^c	49%**
A power legitimated by E prefers the existing communication system	24	60%*
A power legitimated by E <u>could</u> sanction S <u>if</u> he preferred the existing system	24	58%**

Sources: Line 1 is from Lineweber, et al., 1980; line 2 from Thomas, et al., 1980; line 3 from Thomas, et al., 1981; line 4 from Walker and Smith-Donals, 1981; line 5 from Ford, 1981; and line 6 is from Zelditch and Ford, 1980.

a The rate of change includes both individualistic and collective change-responses in all experiments. See Note 5 for the method by which the "per cent of change delayed or prevented" is computed.

b There are small changes in procedure from experiment to experiment, but each comparison is made to an exactly similar baseline.

c Pooled data from two experiments. After being run with males, the same condition was replicated on females. There were no differences by sex.

* P < .05

** P < .01

Figure 1. The policy process, showing nondecision outcomes.

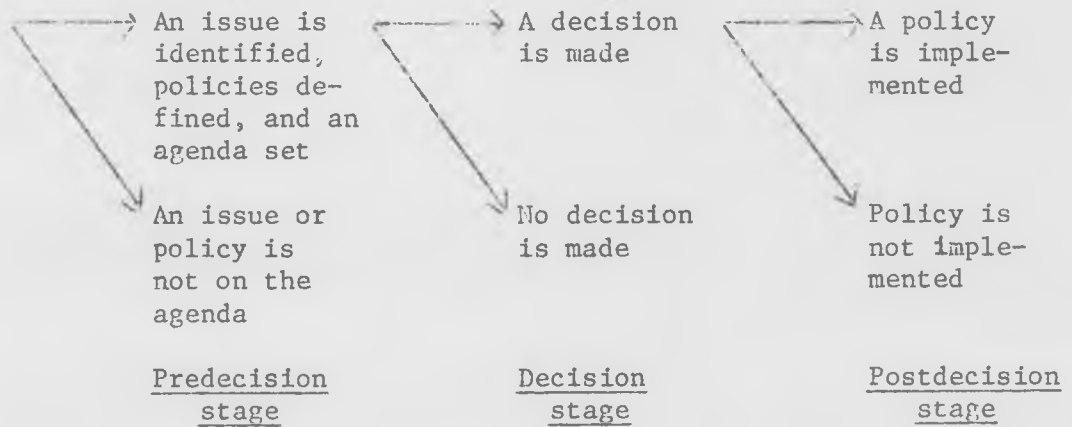


Figure 1a. The principal stages of the policy process.

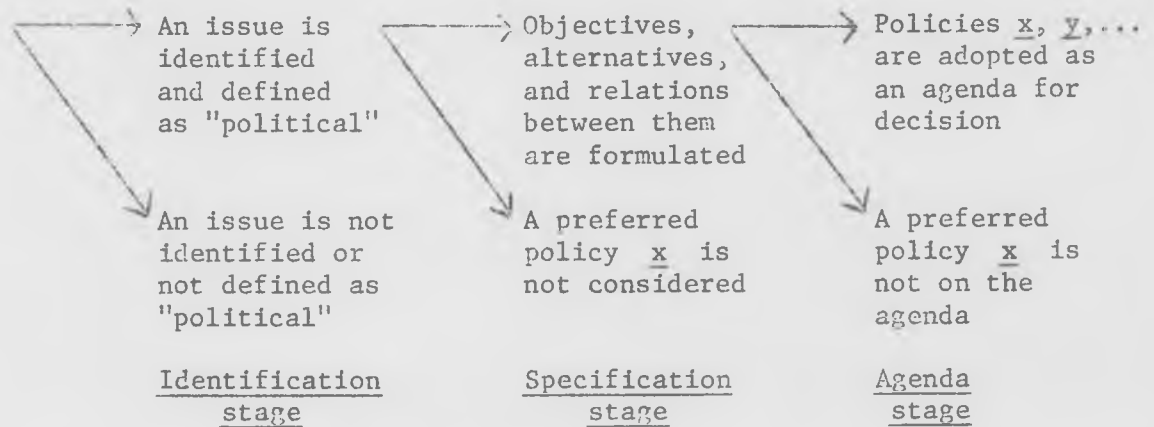


Figure 1b. The stages of predecision politics.

Figure 2. Most and Least Centralized Communication Networks possible in the Experiment.

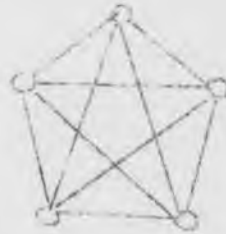


Figure 2a. Bavelas's "Wheel".
All communication is controlled by the central position.

Figure 2b. An "All-to-All" Network.
All positions have equal access to all information.

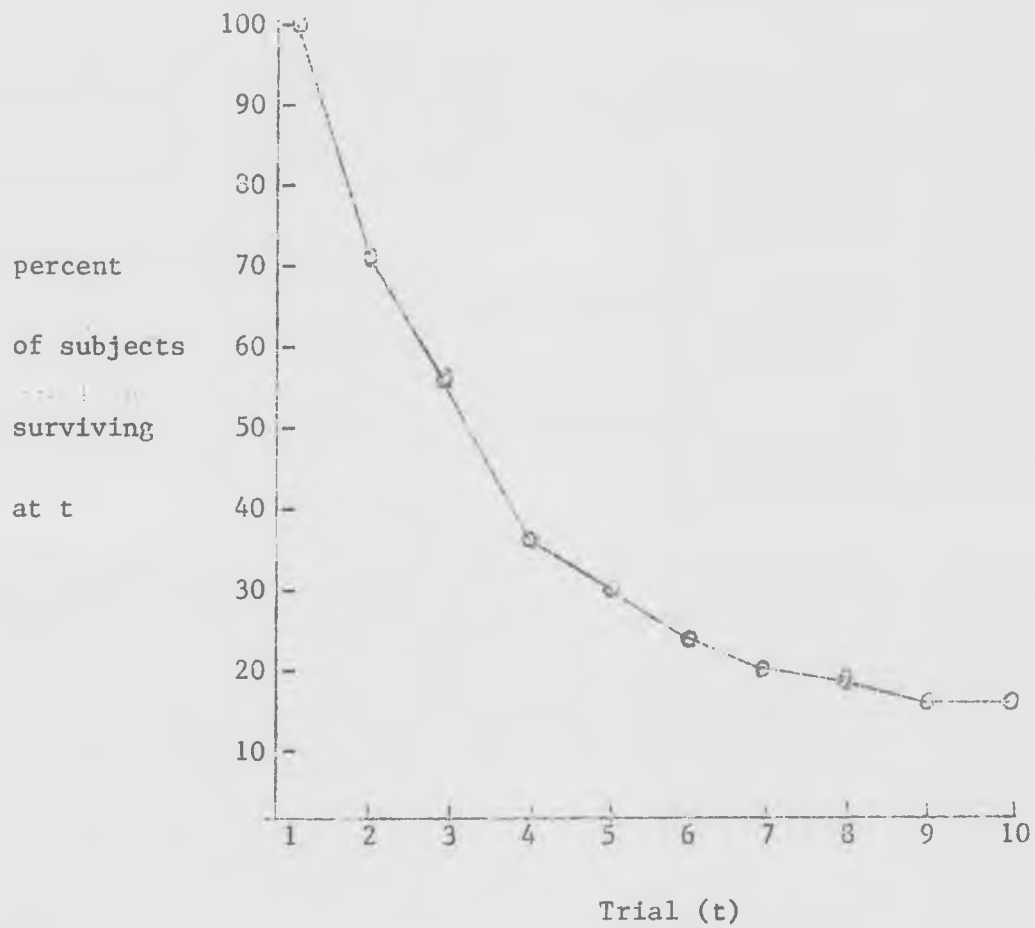


Figure 3. Mean survival curve, showing the baseline rate of change for S's in the peripheral positions of centralized communication networks, for 111 subjects in 5 experiments.