UNDERSTANDING POLICY SUCCESS
Also by Allan McConnell

*Governing after Crisis: The Politics of Investigation, Accountability and Learning*  
(edited with A. Boin and P. ’t Hart)

*Risk and Crisis Management in the Public Sector* (with L. Drennan)

*Scottish Local Government*

*The Politics and Policy of Local Taxation in Britain*

*State Policy Formation and the Origins of the Poll Tax*
Understanding Policy Success

Rethinking Public Policy

Allan McConnell
Dedicated to
(in order of appearance)
Rafael, Aibidh, Calum and Sofia
Contents

List of Tables, Boxes, Figures and Appendices xii
Acknowledgements xv

Introduction: The Thorny Topic of Policy Success 1
Success: Much Talked About but Rarely Studied 3
The Importance of Conceptualizing Policy 4
Plan and Approach of the Book 6

1 Perspectives on Success: The State of the Discipline 10
Policy Evaluation and Improvement 11
Public Value 14
Studies of Success and Failure 17
Success 17
Failure 21
Promoting Good Practice in Policy-making and Programme Management 23
Political Strategy and Survival 25
Conclusion: Taking Stock of Existing Literature 27

2 Policy Success: Definitions and Dimensions 29
What Is Policy Success? 30
A foundationalist position: policy success as ‘fact’ 30
An anti-foundationalist position: policy success as ‘interpretation’ 36
Policy success: a realistic definition 39
The Three Dimensions of Policy Success 40
Process success 40
Programme success 45
Political success 49
Conclusion 54

3 Dissecting Success: The Spectrum from Success to Failure 55
The General Relationship between Success and Failure 55
Policy success 57
Durable success 58
Conflicted success 60
Precarious success 61
Policy failure 62
Conclusion 119

Appendix: Framing Success and Framing Failure – 2008
House of Commons Debate on the UK Labour Government’s Fiscal Rules 120

6 Strategies for Policy-Making Success: Understanding Opportunities and Risks 124
Strategies for Policy Making Success 125
Striking a deal 125
Using warm, fuzzy, ambiguous language 126
Using evidence 128
Deliberating 130
Joining it up 132
Using executive muscle 134
Inwards transferring of ideas and practices from other jurisdictions 136
Innovating 139

Placing Success Strategies in their Context: Helping Explain Feasibilities and Risks 140
Mapping the contexts 140
An overview of feasible and risky strategies 145
Case Study 1: Gun Control Reform In Australia after the 1996 Port Arthur Massacre: Mapping Policy-making Contexts to Explain a Case of Policy Makers ‘Getting It Right’ 149
Case Study 2: The Poll Tax in Britain: Mapping Policy-making Contexts to Explain a Case of Policy-makers ‘Getting It Wrong’ 151
Conclusion 153

Appendix: Differing Contexts and the Feasibility of Strategies for Policy Making Success 154

7 Strategies for Evaluating Success: Understanding Pay-Offs and Pitfalls 160
What Do Policy-makers Want to Achieve From Evaluations? 162
A Tight-Grip Policy Evaluation Strategy 164
Keeping tight control of the format of evaluations 165
Narrowing the parameters of investigation 168
Choosing evaluators who are most likely to produce the desired outcomes 169
Strategic use of funding and timescales 171
Specifying tools, techniques and methods 172
Intervening during the course of the evaluation 173
Restricting or blocking the release of the report 174
Spinning the report 174
Strategy: A Loose-Grip Approach to Policy Evaluations 176

Relaxing the format of the evaluation 176
Allowing wide parameters for investigation 177
Choosing evaluators who may be highly critical of government policy 178
Refusing to mould the evaluation through use of funding and timescales 178
Allowing substantial freedom in evaluation tools, techniques and methods 179
Resisting temptation to intervene during the course of the evaluation 180
Allowing full and widespread dissemination of the report 181
Resisting spin 181

Contexts in which Some Strategies are Riskier than Others 182
Mapping the contexts 182
An overview of feasible and risky strategies 185


Conclusion 189

Appendix: Contexts and Feasibility of Tight-, Relaxed- and Loose-Grip Evaluation Strategies 190

8 Reflections: Cultivating, Sustaining, Learning From and Predicting Success 196

Introduction 196

Are the Conditions for Cultivating Success the Same in Different Policy Contexts? 196
An argument: conditions for success are universal 197
An argument: conditions for success are different in every context 199
An argument: success as familial 200

How Sustainable are Policy Programme Successes? 201
Factors helping sustain successful programmes 201
Factors hindering the sustainability of successful programmes 204
What factors help determine whether a policy success will be sustainable or unsustainable? 206

Are We More Liable to Learn from Successes or Failures? 207
A starting point: the nature of change and learning 207
Learning from success 209
Learning from failure 211
Learning from success and failure: a balance sheet 212

Can We Predict Policy Success? 215
List of Tables, Boxes, Figures and Appendices

Tables

2.1 Foundationalist, anti-foundationalist and realist perspectives on the nature of policy success 31
2.2 The three main dimensions of policy success 46
3.1 Policy as process: the spectrum from success to failure 65
3.2 Policy as programme: the spectrum from success to failure 67
3.3 Policy as politics: the spectrum from success to failure 73
4.1 Types of evidence sources used to assess whether a policy is successful 94
5.1 The multiple bases of claims that policy is successful 106
5.2 The multiple bases of claims that policy has failed 108
6.1 Port Arthur: mapping the policy-making context 149
6.2 Local taxation and the rating system in the UK (1985): mapping the policy-making context 152
7.1 Range of outcomes that policy-makers might want from policy evaluations 163
7.2 Approaches of strategic decision-makers regarding policy evaluations 166
7.3 Mapping the policy evaluation risk context of the Review of Public Administration in Northern Ireland 188

Boxes

I.1 Recent news headlines on the topic of policy success 2
2.1 An example of programme success: flood control in the Netherlands 33
2.2 An example of process success: a decision not to reform the electoral system in British Columbia 42
2.3 An example of political success: Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s ‘sorry’ speech 52
3.1 An example of conflicted process success: the production of legislation to ban the wearing of conspicuous religious symbols in France 68
3.2 An example of durable programme success: microfinance in Bangladesh 70
List of Tables, Boxes, Figures and Appendices

3.3 An example of precarious political success: Guantanamo Bay detention camp and the Bush administration 76
5.1 Typical statements articulating policy success 104
5.2 Example of claim to success based on achievements to date: Tessa Jowell, UK Olympics Minister, and London’s hosting of the Olympic Games in 2012 113

Figures

5.1 Size matters: a scale of claims to success 114

Appendices

4.1 A ten-point framework to help guide researchers in assessing the success or otherwise of a policy 96
5.1 Framing success and framing failure: 2008 House of Commons debate on the UK Labour government’s fiscal rules 120
6.1 Differing contexts and the feasibility of strategies for policy-making success 154
7.1 Contexts and feasibility tight-, relaxed- and loose-grip evaluation strategies 190
Acknowledgements

At the time of writing, Oprah Winfrey has reached a deal with an insurance company in a dispute over the right to use the phrase ‘that aha moment’. Well, I distinctly remember using the term when learning to play the guitar back in 1974 (my moment was realizing that you could play two, three and even four notes with one stroke of the plectrum) and so I’m not convinced that she has a monopoly on the term. Indeed, I continue to have aha moments – one of them being the driving force behind this book. The person responsible was Dave Marsh, then of the University of Birmingham and now of the Australian National University in Canberra. During a lengthy sabbatical at the University of Sydney, he suggested that there was real gap in the policy literature, because there was virtually nothing written on the topic of policy success. He was absolutely correct and I realized to my astonishment, that on the fringes of numerous lectures I had given and papers I had written on various matters of public policy, I had unwittingly been building up a stock of ideas on ‘policy success’ that were so obvious that I had failed to realise their significance.

Dave suggested that we might write on the topic, and the product was an article published in Public Administration, together with a reply to Mark Bovens who published a commentary on our paper (see Marsh and McConnell, 2010a and 2010b; Bovens 2010). I then decided to develop the topic in much more extensive form – hence this book. I have many people to thank but first and foremost is Dave, whose suggestion produced my ‘aha moment’, but who was also most generous in discussing ideas and offering advice.

Several chapters were read and commented on by Paul ‘t Hart, Mike Howlett and Dave Marsh. Their suggestions were more useful than they probably realise and I thank them for taking the time to offer sage advice. The book is much better for their input. Ideas were also presented and formulated over several conferences: the Australian Political Studies Association (Brisbane), European Consortium of Political Research Workshops (Lisbon) and Asia-Pacific Science, Technology and Society (Brisbane). I thank all the participants for their helpful comments and suggestions. The dialogue with Mark Bovens in Public Administration was also influential in shaping my thinking.

At the University of Sydney, I had the good fortune to teach hundreds of public servants in the Department of Government and International Relations and the Graduate School of Government. The students kept me on my toes and I think I kept them on their toes by suggesting that they should not think of policy processes as (simply) ‘rational’ solutions to policy problems. Much public policy accords with what I would call ‘good politics but bad policy’. This
xvi  

Acknowledgements

has become something of a mantra for the book and I thank all the students for passing on all their experiences and insights to me.

Erin Kelly performed a sterling job in undertaking initial research. Doing so helped kick-start my thoughts on case examples. The book was written partly at the University of Sydney and partly at the University of Strathclyde. I thank all my colleagues there for a supportive working environment, under the headships of Michael Jackson and David Judge respectively.

Steven Kennedy at Palgrave Macmillan has been incredibly supportive but also encouraged me to go beyond the scope I had initially envisaged for the book. There is no escaping Steven’s persistence, but also no escaping the fact that he has a point. The book is immensely better for his suggestions. I also thank two anonymous reviewers for their suggestions and comments. I tried as best I could to address their concerns and there has been the occasional point where I have stood my ground. Overall, however, the comments have allowed me to clarify my arguments, as well as avoiding digging myself into analytical holes. I thank them for their efforts. Any errors or omissions remain my own.

My wife Iris has been the rock of my life – not a particularly easy task when she herself has been studying for PhD. I thank her for everything: space to write, moral support, encouragement and advice on research methods! In the process of writing the book, four little additions have come into the family – helped into the world by Lalla and Ivan, Steven and Violet, and Debbie and Patrick. I dedicate the book to the ‘newbies’ and their successes to come.

ALLAN MCCONNELL

Note: Material from a UK House of Commons debate in Appendix 5.1 is reproduced under Click-Use Parliamentary licence P2009000114.
Chapter 1

Perspectives on Success: The State of the Discipline

There have been very few studies of what constitutes policy success, yet understanding the nature of policy success matters more than ever before. The slow decline of partisan politics and class voting patterns in many countries, coupled with the growth of the world-wide-web and the rapid availability of facts, arguments and policy stories, means that citizens (and the media) are scrutinizing and judging policies to an unprecedented degree. Claims of policy success and counterclaims of policy failure have become a key currency of political competition. Later chapters will help fill the gap in our understanding of policy success, but we should not assume that the paucity of literature on the topic renders existing writings of no interest. The opposite is the case. There is much that can be learned from several diverse sets of public policy-related literature focusing on what constitutes good and valuable policy, as well as literature that focuses on failure. Many of the assumptions about what constitutes success are implicit rather than explicit. The goal of this chapter is to draw out a set of issues that can be taken forward in subsequent chapters in terms of identifying, measuring and sustaining policy success. As will be seen, many similar themes run through disparate groups of literature.

The chapter is not exhaustive in its survey of writings dealing even implicitly with policy success. As Pollitt (2008: 31) notes in his book on time and public policy/management: ‘It is a general law that large literature searches on almost any topic yield unmanageably huge quantities of potentially relevant material.’ Research for this book is no exception, and sheer practicalities have necessitated choosing what to exclude and include. So, for example, I have chosen to exclude literature on good governance with its emphasis on systems of democracy and accountability, and game theory with its focus on ‘good’ strategy. The reason for exclusion lies in the logic I have adopted for inclusion. I have chosen to deal with mostly policy-related literature that contains quite strong assumptions about policy success (albeit implicit and couched in different terminology) and broader writings dealing with the political benefit to policy-makers of adopting particular courses of action. Therefore, the chapter deals directly with literature on policy evaluation and improvement, public value, studies of success and failure, promoting good practice, and political strategy and survival. The
chapter concludes by highlighting issues to be developed in subsequent chapters. As will be shown, explorations of what constitutes good and valuable public policy have not been easy journeys for academic analysts.

**Policy evaluation and improvement**

In the traditional policy cycle framework, which sometimes doubles as both an explanatory and normative model of policy-making, ‘evaluation’ is found after the policy implementation phase. Evaluation, according to Dye (2005: 332) is ‘learning about the consequences of policy’. Consistent with liberal democratic values of power dispersal and public accountability, policy-makers and others can find out what is ‘working’ and what is not, and follow through with policy refinements, policy improvements and policy learning. Wildavsky (1987: 7) encapsulates the spirit of this tradition in his statement that ‘what we want from evaluation in political arenas … [is] recognition and correction of errors, encouraged by social processes rich with varied reactions.’

Literature on evaluation has burgeoned in recent years, especially since the early 1980s. The world-wide financial crisis of the mid-1970s, high inflation, high unemployment, and the turn against Keynesian principles of public sector growth and the beginnings of public sector cutbacks, led to greater pressures to achieve value for money. Much of the new thinking drew on the free market ideas of Friedman, Hayek and others. The new agenda involved greater scrutiny of public services, attacks on big government, accusations of government overload, and manifestos for a limited steering role for government (see Hughes 2003; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004; Prasad 2006). It became increasingly difficult, therefore, for public services to escape the scrutiny of (arguably) more pragmatic labour/left-leaning governments (Callaghan in the UK, Schmidt in West Germany, Hawke and Keating in Australia, Lange in New Zealand), as well as the more zealous conservatives and liberals (the Thatcher government in the UK, the Reagan and Bush Senior years in the US, and Howard in Australia). Therefore, the spotlight of policy evaluation shone increasingly brightly on public services. The mantra of the 1980s and 1990s was very much on value for money (Campbell-Smith 2008), while the more recent focus has been on performance improvement (Boyne 2003, 2004; Barber 2007; Hodgson et al. 2007).

Many policy evaluations are conducted within or commissioned by government from academics, consultants, non-governmental organizations, and through ad hoc committees/commissions of inquiry, particularly following crisis or disaster (Prasser 2006b; Drennan and McConnell 2007; Boin et al. 2008). Generally, however, there is less academic literature on evaluation than we might expect. For example, Hodgson et al. (2007: 362) found only 51 empirical studies in the UK focusing on public sector/service improvement.
Nevertheless, when evaluation research and writing from other countries is factored-in, particularly from the US, there is a rich and diverse body of literature with which to engage. This diversity in evaluation research helps provide some indication of the types of issues and debates that we need to contend with in terms of policy success.

First, the policy evaluation literature rarely uses the term ‘policy success’ but, nevertheless, it contains strong and implicit assumptions about what constitutes successful policy. For example, there is a strong normative strand in the evaluation literature (deLeon 1988; Radin 2000). This is especially so in the US (see, for example, Gupta 2001; Davidson 2005; Weimer and Vining 2005). The assumption is that evaluation is a tool used to help produce better policy and client-oriented advice to government. The implication is that ‘good’ policy is whatever serves the interests, vision and agenda of government. However, policy analysis can serve many purposes other than the wishes of government, and therefore policy evaluation itself can serve different purposes. It can solve puzzles (Winship 2006), facilitate democratic debate (Ingram and Schneider 2006) and critique existing institutions and policies (Dryzek 2006a). Balloch and Taylor (2005: 250) put the matter forcefully when they argue that evaluation should concern itself with challenging prescribed indicators and improving power-sharing. The deeper assumption here is that successful policy is infused with a healthy dose of equality, justice and fairness. Within the literature, many other explicit and implicit benchmarks of success can be found. For example:

- policy improvement – that is, success resides in services being better than they were before
- what matters is what works – that is, success resides in what the evidence base tells us about the policy and its impact
- economy efficiency and effectiveness – that is, success resides in the meeting of highly desirable criteria for the provision of public services.

Overall, therefore, some initial issues present themselves when thinking about the nature of policy success. In essence: a framework is needed for comprehending the existence of different measures of successful policy, ranging from (roughly) policy according with the wishes of government, to policy that adheres to and promotes certain key principles.

Second, and related, there is a diversity of opinion on evaluation techniques. Again, the implicit issue is: what is the best way to identify and measure success? A strong divide exists between science-based and value-based approaches. The former, described by Bovens et al. (2006) as ‘rationalistic evaluation’ and by Dunn (2004: 359–60) as ‘pseudo evaluation’, assumes that success or otherwise is an objective phenomenon, and it is the task of evaluators to gather information and data, compiling and presenting it in a neutral and impartial way. Such
approaches are found particularly, but not exclusively, in the US. Typical evaluation techniques with the veneer of science include:

- benefit-cost analysis (see Weimer and Vining 2005; Miller and Robbins 2007)
- the balanced scorecard approach, involving weighing up different indicators in their context, rather than seeking the attainment of a clear target as a measure of success (Kaplan and Norton 1992, 1997)
- results-based monitoring and evaluation (Kusek and Rist 2004).

Even adherents to such approaches recognize the limits of scientific rationalism. As Bovens et al. (2006: 323–4) suggest: ‘political realities have simply been too harsh to scientific rationalists’. Nevertheless, in the rationalist approach, grey areas and ambiguities tend to be presented as marginal issues to be addressed in an impartial manner. However, for other analysts, these ‘marginal issues’ are fundamental because within them resides issues of conflict resolution and power. For example, Taylor and Balloch (2005b: 1) argue that:

Evaluation ... is socially constructed and politically articulated ... evaluation operates within discursive systems and ... its social meaning is pre-constituted within wider relations of power independently of any particular use.

Essentially, therefore, evaluation from this latter perspective is much more about maintaining path dependencies and policy pathways than it is about redirecting them. As Dye (2005: 343) argues: ‘Government agencies have a heavy investment – organizational, financial, physical, psychological – in current programs and policies. They are predisposed against findings that these policies do not work.’ The general lesson for present purposes in terms of thinking about policy success is that there is no ‘magic bullet’ for evaluating policies (Fischer 2003: 8). Somehow, any examination of policy success needs to contend with different approaches to assessing success.

Third, a particularly useful aspect of the evaluation literature is that it alerts us to the complexities of assessing policies. Such complexities are given more, or less, emphasis depending on the particular perspective adopted, but they include:

- weighing up overall costs and benefits
- weighing up the impacts on differing target groups
- considering unintended consequences
- dealing with short and long-term effects
- indirect symbolic costs and benefits – that is, beyond the programme level
- how to deal with lack of evidence
identifying standards to be used for evaluation – for example, before-and-after comparison, pre-identified targets.

Such issues will prove vital in the attempt in this book to deal with policy success (Chapters 4 and 7, in particular).

Fourth, the evaluation literature brings a diversity of assumptions in terms of how success can actually be achieved. One strand assumes, by and large, that success is a matter of refinement and learning. The literature on policy improvement typifies. It assumes that success is the incremental adjustment of existing policies, based on evaluations and learning lessons from them. Strategies for improvement, therefore, include increased competition, effective leadership, organizational reform, stakeholder participation and better quality management techniques (Boyne 2003; Hodgson et al. 2007). The more radical end of evaluation studies is critical of the narrowness of evaluations (Fischer 1995; Taylor and Balloch 2005; Pawson 2006) because they can be:

- conducted within strict value limits set by government
- commissioned from evaluators sympathetic to government goals
- conceived as one-off evaluations that do not take a longer-term and more systematic perspective.

Therefore, such evaluations carry the stamp of political authority but are often focused on ‘proving’ that a policy has worked, or only assessing whether it has been executed properly. A variety of critical issues can be excluded from such evaluations, including:

- whether or not the original policy goals were legitimate
- inputs into the evaluation that would be likely to lead to different results
- the impact of the policy on societal power relations.

Once again, therefore, the intensely political matter of what can be done to attain and identify success is an issue that the evaluation literature deals with, and that needs to be factored into the subsequent examination of policy success in this book.

Public value

The emergence of debates and thinking around public value since the mid-1990s gives further indication of the difficulties in dealing with the topic of policy success, as well as some of the issues that need to be addressed and explored further. In many respects, one of the most interesting aspects is less the nature of public value per se, than about the debates and issues that have
emerged as practitioners and academics grapple with what public value actually is and how it can be achieved.

Discussion of public value typically begins with the seminal work from Mark Moore (1995) of Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government; *Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Government*. The context of his work is relevant. The general US antipathy to state intervention, and a mood captured by Osborne and Gaebler (1992) in their clarion calls for a leaner, more efficient and ‘hands off’ approach to government, provided the catalyst for Moore to promote an alternative vision. He envisaged public sector managers (defined widely to include elected representatives such as presidents, mayors and governors) as being successful when they: ‘increase the public value produced by public sector organizations in both the short and the long run. Indeed, the idea that public managers should produce value creating organizations matches the criteria of success used in the private sector’ (Moore 1995: 10). For Moore, public value is a surrogate for success. It is an attempt to define what a successful public sector looks like. He suggests, in his strategic triangle framework, that three broad public value tests need to be met:

1. production of things of value to overseers, clients, and beneficiaries at low cost in terms of both money and authority;
2. legitimacy in terms of authority and political sustainability in terms of attracting money and authority from the political authorising environment;
3. operational and administrative feasibility i.e. activities needs to be accomplished in order to meet organisational goals.

(Moore 1995: 71)

In a book with three main parts, Moore devotes the second part to ‘Building Support and Legitimacy’, and the third to operational aspects of delivering value. The implications for policy success, therefore, are that success resides not only in good services and good outcomes (Kelly *et al.* 2002), but also in issues of process. This important point will later form part of the argument in Chapters 2 and 3.

From such small seeds, the public value phenomenon has grown. It is now being conceptualized as a new paradigm supplanting new public management (O’Flynn 2007; Stoker 2006b) and has become the standard of appraisal for public sector policies as diverse as the arts (Gray 2008), bushfire control (Marton and Phillips 2005) and public infrastructure procurement (Charles *et al.* 2008). According to Rhodes and Wanna (2007), the public value phenomenon has meant that government intervention is now ‘back in fashion’.

This simple outline of Moore’s approach and its growth belies deeper complexities and debates surrounding public value. These issues also provide
pointers on our journey to deal with policy success because they mirror many of the complexities surrounding it. Several are related but are worth treating separately.

First, public value is a slippery concept. Moore does not provide a direct definition, and subsequent debates confirm this (for example, Rhodes and Wanna 2007, 2008, 2009; Alford 2008). There is a similarity to other concepts such as the ‘public interest’ that are difficult to pin down. Rhodes and Wanna (2007) cite Schubert on how the public interest might be conceived as the electoral expressions of the popular will as implemented unwaveringly by public officials; or in higher, natural laws interpreted by officials; or in pluralist bargaining in order to mediate between and resolve conflicts. If a dose of free market critique is added, public value would equate with little or no public intervention, except for the protection of private property rights. It seems, therefore, that neither public value, nor its close relation policy success, is easy to define.

Second, and related, the point is made by van Gestel et al. (2008: 144) that ‘the study of public values is as ambiguous as it is fundamental’. Indeed, Rhodes and Wanna (2007: 408) suggest that its attraction lies in its ambiguity: ‘it is all things to all people’. Who doesn’t want public value? Who doesn’t want policy success? Both are simple wordings with positive connotations, but meaning different things to different people.

Third, and following on, public value is neither a homogeneous state of affairs, nor devoid of internal conflicts. To be precise, many studies of public value have revealed that, in practice, different public values compete with each other. For example, Steenhuisen and van Eeten (2008) in their study of Dutch Railways, a regulated organization providing the bulk of train services in the Netherlands, illustrate that the rail body had to cope with imperatives to satisfy competing values such as punctuality versus allowing passengers time to transfer between trains, and maximizing the number of trains versus reducing the number of trains to create spare capacity in times of irregularity.

Fourth, some analysis emphasizes the contextual aspects of public value. In other words, a policy delivering public value in one jurisdiction might not necessarily deliver value in another. A report commissioned by the Municipal Association Victoria into Bushfires in Australia, stressed the need for policy to be based on a strong local evidence base, rather than policy models being imported from overseas (Marton and Phillips 2005). Indeed, Rhodes and Wanna (2007, 2008, 2009) go as far as arguing that the concept of public value is less relevant and useful in Westminster systems because it pre-supposes a degree of managerial autonomy that is not provided in strongly hierarchical systems with disciplined political parties. Such arguments, therefore, steer analysis towards consideration of a policy’s success (or even failure) varying according to context. These arguments dovetail well with the literature on the potential pitfalls of policy transfer (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000).
Fifth, many of the debates surrounding public value focus on strategies to achieve it. Options are many and, according to Moore (1995) involve aiming for the right level of abstraction in terms of goals, a balanced approach to the risks involved, and ensuring that strategies are aligned with public purposes. Rhodes and Wanna (2007) develop the risk dimension by proposing a ‘ladder of public value’, with strategies varying from low-risk marginal operational refinements in order to achieve public value, through to high-risk strategies driven by managerial ideas and priorities.

Sixth, different perspectives exist on the measurement of public value. For example, Kelly et al. (2002) envisage the public as the ultimate arbiters of value and recognize the difficulties in objective measurement and establishing causal connections between policy intentions and outcomes. Their framework focuses on the benchmarks of services, outcomes and trust, using polls and surveys to gauge opinion but recognizing the limits of knowledge. By contrast, Cole and Parston (2006) propose the Accenture Public Service Value Model, tilting much more towards value as ‘fact’. They describe the model as ‘a disciplined approach to public sector performance management focused on defining outcomes, quantifying results and identifying ways to achieve increased outcomes cost-effectively’ (Cole and Parston 2006: 143). Overall, differing perspectives on how easily (or otherwise) public value can be measured indicate that any analysis of policy success needs to deal with broadly similar issues.

Finally, there is the issue of what Rhodes and Wanna (2007, 2008) describe as the ‘dark side’ of public policy. In other words, behind the upbeat language of public policy there is the reality that some policies involve spying, torture and arrest without evidence. Subsequent chapters of this book, therefore, need to deal with policies that might, in fact, be successful in achieving their aims, but are unpalatable and even sickening to many.

Studies of success and failure

Very little has been written explicitly on the topic of policy success. Far more has been written on failure. In this section, both sets of (occasionally overlapping) literature will be considered. The latter will be particularly important because it will lead towards thinking about how the most resounding of successes contain within them small aspects of failure.

Success

In 1976, Donna Kerr published an article in Policy Sciences entitled ‘The Logic of “Success” and Successful Policies’. The preoccupations of the economic and political volatilities of the time seem to have been influential in her thinking. The analysis comes to assumptions about success by first of all visiting failure.
She argues that polices can fail because they cannot be implemented, or do not fulfil their intended purpose(s) or cannot be justified in terms of the norms they promote. It is only in the final summary to the article that success is dealt with explicitly. She argues that ‘a policy that does not fail is successful’ (Kerr 1976: 362). She proceeds to couch success in terms of the opposite of the conditions for failure; that is, implementation success, instrumental success and justificatory success. Nothing further is discussed on these matters but the article does at least indicate early policy analysis thinking about the nature of success. Success might be bureaucratic, in the sense that a policy is implemented according to the rules laid down. Success might also be the achievement of goals, akin to the Oxford English Dictionary definition given previously. And success might also be the meeting of valued moral criteria, such as fairness and equity. Yet, one aspect of her argument might seem quite bizarre: that policies succeed if they do not fail. This assumes that anything short of outright failure is a success; for example, 60 per cent of trains running on time is just as much a success as 90 per cent. Many people would surely disagree, but perhaps Kerr has a valid point buried here. Perhaps policies that are not outright failures contain some elements of success, even if they are hotly contested and beset by implementation failures.

Subsequently, in 1980, Ingram and Mann edited a book entitled Why Policies Succeed or Fail. Sir Isaac Newton’s famous statement that he had ‘stood on the shoulders of giants’ does not apply in the case of Ingram and Mann. The fact that their bibliography contains not a single reference to any article or book on policy success indicates the paucity of literature in this field. The book, unfortunately, adds little to our understanding of success. Ingram and Mann (1980), in their editors’ Introduction, do not define success and concentrate instead on failure, perhaps understandably in the context of the political and economic turmoil of the 1970s. Their only key observation is that: ‘success and failure are slippery concepts, often highly subjective and reflective of an individual’s perception of need, and perhaps even psychological disposition toward life … policy success or failure is in the eye of the beholder’ (Ingram and Mann 1980: 12). Stuart Nagel, in the Introduction, produces the only explicit definitions of success. He states that:

- ‘In terms of intent, a policy is a success if it achieves its goals.’ (Nagel 1980: 8).
- ‘In terms of reality, a policy is a success if its benefits minus its costs are maximized.’ (Nagel 1980: 8).

Ingram and Mann are more sympathetic to the latter, because a major focus of their argument is that unrealistic expectations are placed on modern government, and that government should not be judged by formal programme goals. Hence, the ‘difficulty with policy is that it often begins with the selection of
unrealizable aims’ (Ingram and Mann 1980: 19). In developing their argument, therefore, they suggest that successful policy requires reasonable demands on government and realistic policy goals.

The disappointing level of engagement with success in Ingram and Mann’s book, is compensated by Bovens et al. (2001a) in their mammoth volume *Success and Failure in Public Governance: A Comparative Analysis*. It is a product of 33 contributors, studying six countries and four policy sectors: decline of the steel industry, health care reform, innovation in banking, and managing blood supplies against HIV. Bovens et al. are more concerned with examining the state of public governance and its capacity to cope with new challenges, than focusing on a few disastrous issues and generalizing from them. Therefore, they make a conscious effort to think about ‘success’ rather than adding to existing bodies of work on policy failures and planning disasters. A key framework proposed is the distinction between programme and political dimensions of success. Therefore:

- ‘In a *programmatic* mode of assessment, the focus is on the effectiveness, efficiency and resilience of the specific policies being evaluated.’ (Bovens et al. 2001b: 20)
- ‘the *political* dimension of assessment refers to the way policies and policy-makers become evaluated in the political arena.’ (Bovens et al. 2001b: 20)

This distinction, and the book in general, provide the richest pickings to date for any scholar interested in policy success. The details of their argument bear closer examination, because these points will be picked up and developed in subsequent chapters.

It recognizes that ‘success … means different things to different people at different times’ (Bovens et al. 2001b: 20). It also recognizes that assessments need to take temporal, spatial, cultural and political factors into account. Furthermore, it acknowledges the existence of conflict between the programmatic and political aspects of policy, while also tackling the conditions necessary (or at least conducive to) producing success. It focuses particularly on consensual styles of policy-making, and the building of collaborative networks within both the public sector and with the private sector.

There are, however, several issues either absent from the analysis or underdeveloped. They recognize briefly that success is not ‘all or nothing’ in their comment that ‘It may be … appropriate to label steel restructuring as a matter of non-failure than to speak of straightforward success’ (Bovens et al. 2001c: 596). They also provide detailed criteria for assessing the programmatic and political dimensions, but only develop their framework up to a point. Programme indicators of success vary across each of their sectoral cases. For example, governance of the steel sector is assessed in terms of the financial costs
of restructuring, the economic viability post-restructuring and the size of employment losses that are sustained (Bovens et al. 2001b: 21). By contrast, health sector reform is assessed in terms of how long the reform episode lasted, the ability to achieve short- and long-term reform ambitions, and the reduction of professional dominance. In many respects, such bespoke criteria are perfectly valid for diverse cases (indeed, broader ad hoc literature dealing with the success of individual cases also uses bespoke criteria). However, more generic criteria are needed for a success heuristic to have lasting impact beyond a select group of case studies. Finally, while they focus on the programmatic and political dimensions of policy success, they do not deal with the possibility that policy processes might themselves be successful. For example, a policy produced after extensive consultation with stakeholders is likely to be a process success (regardless of the specific programme developed) because it brings constitutional or quasi-constitutional legitimacy to the policy. Bovens (2010) recognized subsequently, in response to an article by David Marsh and myself (Marsh and McConnell 2010a) that the ‘process’ dimension is, indeed, a valuable addition to the study of policy. In subsequent chapters of this book, the issue of process success will be developed in detail.

The most recent writing on the topic of policy success (with the exception of Marsh, McConnell and Bovens) is a short book chapter by Scott Prasser (2006a) entitled ‘Aligning “Good Policy” With “Good Politics” ’ in a book edited by Hal Colebatch (2006) on how the ‘policy cycle’ is problematic in our understanding of policy processes. His concern is to separate policy and politics, based on the recognition that a policy might at times be successful in one of these spheres, but not in the other. Hence, a policy might be ‘bad policy’ put provide political rewards. He produces a long list of 15 criteria for good politics. It includes gaining favourable publicity, being seen as a winner, winning votes, showing leadership, appearing open and giving the impression of being politics-free. Indicators are fewer in number for good policy. They are: being seen as a credible policy, tackling the policy problem, having real substance (as opposed simply to rhetoric) and being fiscally responsible.

Prasser’s chapter is certainly useful in pointing towards a number of issues with which a detailed examination of policy success will need to deal. However, it covers a great deal of ground very quickly, and lacks the kind of overarching framework that can be picked up and used easily by others. Also, it assumes that a feature of good policy is that it needs to have substance and that it directly tackles the problem. However, as I will argue later in the book, many policy programmes (especially involving ‘wicked issues’) are successful in terms of their goals precisely because they do not tackle root causes and complex symptoms. Prasser’s chapter is a useful hint to the direction we need to take, but the ideas need to be developed in an extended and detailed manner.
Failure

Bovens et al. (2001b) deal with failure as the flip side of success and, hence, all the criteria above, and the various issues such as temporality and subjectivity, also apply. This work aside, literature on failure significantly outnumbers that on success. Failure is often an attractive topic to research, and policy failure is certainly a more media-friendly topic than success. In a competition for attention-grabbing headlines, ‘New Health Care Plan is Working According to Plan’ would barely get off the starting blocks against ‘New Health Care Plan is Policy Fiasco’.

The sheer scope of literature on failure is impressive. It cuts across academic disciplines such as political science, economics, geography, sociology, planning, public health and more. Leaving aside literature on specific cases such as the UK poll tax, Hurricane Katrina, 9/11, space shuttle explosions, Bhopal, Chernobyl and others, literature on failures includes:

- human error (Reason 1990; Dekker 2006)
- organizational pathologies (Mitroff and Pauchant 1990; Anheier 1999)
- crises and disasters (Rosenthal et al. 2001; Boin et al. 2005; McEntire 2007)
- policy fiascos, scandals, disasters and pathologies (Hogwood and Peters 1985; Dunleavy 1995; Bovens and ‘t Hart 1996; Tiffen 1999; Thompson 2000)
- risk (Slovic 2000; Drennan and McConnell 2007; Althaus 2008)
- political system overload and failure (King 1976; Offe 1984)
- plagues, pandemics and viruses (Abraham 2004; Barry 2005; Withington 2005; Booker and North 2007)
- corporate failures (Hamilton and Micklethwait 2006; Ricks 2006)
- economic crises (Kindleberger and Aliber 2005; Oliver and Aldcroft 2007)
- state failure (Milliken 2003; Rotberg 2003)
- global calamity and catastrophe (Perrow 2007; Bostrom and Čirković 2008).

It is difficult to do justice to the diversity of ideas and analytical frameworks therein but, nevertheless, the literature does give us a good sense of many issues relating not only to the nature of failure and how we understand it, but also its relationship to success.

First, there have been many attempts to define failure, but there is no universal agreement on what it is. Continual debates take place around the objective versus subjective nature of failure. Failure as ‘fact’ can be found most
often in the literature on organizational failure and human error. Reason (1990: 17) defines error as ‘planned actions that fail to achieve their desired consequences without the intervention of some chance or unforeseeable agency’. However, most other literature pays high regard to the subjective nature of failure, yet does not fully embrace a constructivist approach (that failure is purely in the eye of the beholder). For example, in their work on policy fiascos, Bovens and ’t Hart (1996) lean heavily towards a social constructionist perspective on disasters, giving prominence to the contestability of phenomena, but stop short of a completely subjectivist view. They argue, for instance, that the Space Shuttle Challenger explosion and poverty in America’s cities are ‘real’ failures (Bovens and ’t Hart 1996: 147). There is nothing wrong with ‘constructed’ and ‘real’ dimensions co-existing. But it does indicate that any credible exploration of policy success must contend with both.

Second, there is the related issue of power and interests. A failure for one group or actor is not necessarily a failure for another. Corporate failures provide opportunities for competitors to flourish, policy failures benefit reformists who opposed the policies in the first place, and leadership damage in the wake of crisis provides opportunities for leadership contenders and opponents to rise to power. In terms of policy success, therefore, the issue of ‘failure for whom’ is very important indeed.

Third, there is some recognition of degrees of failure. Such recognition can be found, in a fairly limited way, in literature dealing with the differences between emergencies, disasters and catastrophes (Perry and Quarantelli 2005; McEntire 2007), ranging generally from emergencies as failures that can be coped with routinely by individuals and institutions trained for particular threats, through to catastrophes that are generally conceived of as beyond the coping capacities of institutions and processes. However, risk management literature, by its very nature of being a regularized assessment of the likelihood and likely impact of a graded series of risks, generally provides the most comprehensive treatment. For example, in their book on global catastrophic risks, Bostrom and Ćirković (2008) identify a range of risks from the personal to the trans-generational, each varying in intensity. The outcome is that the smallest failure is a personal one where someone loses a single hair on their head, through to larger failures such as country recession and a global flu pandemic, and then to the ultimate cataclysm, human extinction. For present purposes, the specific categories are not as important as the fact that failures can vary in magnitude. A framework for examining policy successes and their relationship to policy failures needs to do something similar. Chapter 3 will take up this challenge.

Fourth, there is recognition of different types of failure. Process failure is found most clearly in Hall’s (1982) book Great Planning Disasters. He defines a disaster as: ‘any planning process that is perceived by any people to have gone wrong’ (Hall 1982: 2), before examining cases such as the Sydney Opera House and the Anglo-French Concorde. Indeed, process failures leading to crisis or
disaster can be found throughout many works, such as that of Lee Clarke (1999) in his study of the tendencies of contingency planning for crisis to be little more than of symbolic value; Irving Janis (1982) on the role of groupthink in processing threats and producing ‘bad decisions’, and Patrick Dunleavy (1995) on the centralization of power within the British political system making it prone to producing ‘bad’ policies. Writings on programmatic failure can be found particularly in literature on implementation and reform failures (Pressman and Wildavsky 1984; Patashnik 2008), policy pathologies such as underfunding and delusions of grandeur (Hogwood and Peters 1985), and policy fiascos. Political failures are most often found in the literature on the politics of crisis management (Boin et al. 2005; Boin et al. 2008) on leadership damage in the wake of perceived mishandling, and governments being effectively forced to change from their desired course as a consequence of crisis.

Fifth, particularly in the crisis and disaster literature, there is recognition that change is ever present and, indeed, can occur exponentially. Therefore, undesirable states of affairs might not stay that way for very long. They could be catalysts for change. Boin et al. (2008) and also Birkland (1997, 2007) recognize that crises can open windows of opportunity for policy reform. To be explicit, government policy in a particular policy sector can be disastrous at point T1, but lead to reform and ‘success’ at point T2. For example, the UK government’s policy in regulating safety in sports grounds was arguably a disaster at Hillsborough when 96 people died as a result of a crush, but arguably a longer-term success when all-seater stadiums became mandatory after the recommendations of the 1990 Taylor report.

More generally, it is evident from all these groups of literature, that there is limited exploration of the relationship between success and failure, treated more or less equally in terms of analysis. By far the most extensive is Bovens et al. (2001a) in the aforementioned work on public governance. In examining policy success, this book will need to tackle explicitly the issues of success, failure, and the grey areas in between. Chapter 4 takes up this challenge.

Promoting good practice in policy-making and programme management

Most public policy literature is explanatory rather than prescriptive, although there are often prescriptive elements to some degree, varying from small normative assumptions tagged onto primarily explanatory works, through to explicitly ‘how to’ books and articles. Most writings on good practice deal with issues of policy processes and (to a lesser extent) programme management and implementation. Literature that in some way promotes good process (policy-making, broadly defined) includes deliberation and engagement (Carson and Martin 1999; Gutmann and Thompson 2004; Creighton 2005), negotiation
and bargaining (Lindblom 1965; Susskind and Cruikshank 1987) rigorous problem definition and options analysis (Dunn 2004; Bardach 2009), good people skills in policy analysis (Mintrom 2003), good policy design (Schneider and Ingram 1997), and the use of science to guide policy-making (Morgan and Peha 2003; Wagner and Steinzor 2006). A small number of authors also deal with how to implement and effectively manage programmes (Wanna 2007; Cohen et al. 2008).

Rarely will this broad field of literature use the word ‘success’, but it certainly contains strong assumptions of what constitutes ‘good’ policy. One of the most interesting issues for our purposes is the way in which it focuses on particular dimensions of policy. Broadly, they can be separated into issues of policy-making process and issues of programme management and implementation. Each can be dealt with briefly.

What constitutes good policy-making is almost self-evident to certain academics and practitioners. As a rough guide, there are three broad categories of literature here, each containing assumptions about what constitutes successful policy. Some writings arguably straddle more than one category but, nevertheless, the categories are sufficiently distinctive to highlight different assumptions about where successful policy resides.

First, one strand of work, with its roots in post-World War II social and political sciences, focuses on good policy as residing in rational, apolitical analysis. It can be termed as optimizing comprehensive rationality. It focuses on the ways in which goals can be achieved and is based on the thinking that policy should be informed by ‘science’ and epistemic communities of experts. The undercurrent here is that successful policy is policy devoid of ‘politics’. Stokey and Zechauser (1978: 1) argue, for example, that societal well-being depends on government intervention to correct market failure, and that such interventions require the approach of a: ‘rational decision maker who lays out goals and uses the best way to achieve these goals.’ David Mitrany (1966), and his influential functionalist work on international peace and cooperation, argued that cooperation in economic and technical areas devoid of political contestation is the key to a gradualist approach to world peace.

A second strand proactively promotes a set of cherished values that are independent of government. Lindblom (1959, 1965), for example, was preeminent in promoting the virtues of incremental policy change, negotiation and bargaining, as was Crick (1962) in his classic In Defence of Politics. Lindblom (1959: 83) argued that the test of good policy is ‘agreement on policy itself, which remains possible even when agreement on values is not’. Literature on the virtues of citizen engagement and public deliberation also contains strong assumptions about what constitutes good policy. Gastil (2008), drawing on Dahl, typifies with his suggestion that democratic policy-making requires inclusion, deliberation and enlightenment. Indeed, he argues that democracies cannot survive without meeting such tests. Also, Schneider and Ingram (1997: 32) ...
advocate seven principles of good policy design that: ‘will achieve a better balance among the multiple values that need to be served including solving problems, being responsive and accountable to the people, serving justice, and encouraging active empathetic citizenship’. Positions such as these point to success as residing in practices that accord with high level, moral and democratic values.

A third strand of literature is executive-centric, focusing on supporting government to ‘do its job’. It is, in effect, a public/civil service type ethos, although writings come from academia as well as various think tanks and institutes. Some focus on establishing policy priorities in the initial phase of government (Daly et al. 2006), while others focus on issues such as effective management and implementation (Wanna 2007). In their book *The Effective Public Manager*, Cohen et al. (2008) suggest that the effective manager is one who overcomes obstacles and constraints in order to meet long-term objectives. The bottom line in terms of all such writings is that success equates with providing efficient and effective advice to government and its goals, whatever they might be.

Overall, one of the lessons for present purposes is that when policy analysts and commentators go in search of ‘what works’, they come up with widely different answers. Benchmarks vary from rationality through ethics to the wishes of government. Once again, later chapters of this book need to accommodate a diversity of views on what constitutes success, but to stop short of success and failure being nothing more than in the eye of the beholder.

**Political strategy and survival**

Most of the literature examined so far focuses on differing assumptions of what constitutes ‘good’ policy. It focuses particularly on what might constitute good policy processes and good policy programmes. An additional set of literature now needs to be introduced that deals explicitly with ‘politics’. The simple reason is that, if public policy is broadly what governments choose to do (or not do), then government does not just ‘do’ processes or programmes, it also ‘does’ politics. It would be naïve to think that the processes of policy-making, or the types of policies chosen, are devoid of the political interests of parties or government. Success and failure of programmes can have a bearing on elections (campaigns, support, outcomes), strategic direction of government (helping keep policy trajectories on course or knocking them off course), and leadership career pathways (helping turn leaders into ‘heroes’ or ‘villains’). As May (2005) and Althaus (2008) argue, the political viability of policy proposals is a reality of life. Policy options and alternatives have their own intrinsic merits and drawbacks, but their feasibility in terms of being adopted can depend on broader issues such as election timing and the challenges that policy options
pose to key interest groups. To be blunt, therefore, consideration needs to be given to what constitutes successful politics because it has a bearing on the operational realities of policy-making and the programmes adopted. I would suggest that there are three broad groupings of literature on various forms of political strategy and survival that have a bearing on policy success.

First, there are works of political prescription. The founding father is Niccolò Machiavelli (1961) and his work *The Prince* (published originally in 1532), written arguably as an exercise to cultivate the favour of the Medici government in strife-torn Florence. Although much analyzed and disputed, his tract acknowledges and actively encourages, in a pragmatic manner, strategies for the acquisition and maintenance of political power. One implication is that success equates with doing what is necessary to obtain power and hold onto it. The spirit of Machiavelli lives on in the backrooms of politics. However, few academics and practitioners are prepared to advocate such apparent ruthlessness and self-interest, but there are certainly some who write of such matters when others might only speak of them. For example, Dick Morris (1999, 2002), former adviser to Bill Clinton, offers pragmatic advice for politicians in terms of issues such as how to control your own party, how to court your own party, how to defeat bureaucratic inertia and how to win elections – even if you have no charisma! A plethora of books also exist on political campaigning and how to win elections (for example, Shaw 2004; Zetter 2007), although they are typically couched in mundane language. Who really wants to stick their neck out and advocate ‘how to use your position in government to increase the likelihood that you will win the next election’ or ‘how to produce a quick fix policy that will not solve the problem but will get the media off your back’? Nevertheless, literature on political prescription reminds us that policies can have important political consequences. Hence, the achieving of political goals needs somehow to be factored into any assumptions of what constitutes policy success.

Second, the counter to Machiavellian instincts is the literature that recognizes, but critiques, the exercise of political power. For example, Bachrach and Baratz (1970), drawing on Schattschneider (1960) developed the concept of the ‘mobilization of bias’ to help explain the way in which the ‘rules of the game’ create biases in political agendas that favour elites and work against non-elites (in their case, an impoverished black community in Baltimore). Cobb and Ross (1997), in their work on agenda-setting, draw inspiration from some of this thinking and examine the way in which the strategic use of culture and symbolism denies some individuals access to the political agenda. Edelman writes from broadly the same tradition, although his works deals directly with some of the issues with which the present book is concerned. The title of his 1977 book captures the essence of his argument: *Political Language: Words that Succeed and Policies that Fail*. He writes of reassuring words and tokenistic policies often being sufficient to ensure the political viability of unsuccessful...
policies. Political viability accords with *not* disturbing existing hierarchies of power, income or status. The common denominator in all these works is the underlying implication that political success resides in policies that empower non-elites. To take Edelman’s argument further, policy success actually *would* involve disturbing established hierarchies.

Third, and finally, perhaps the theoretical perspective that sits most easily with explaining political self-interest is rational choice theory (or public choice theory) and its assumption that rational self-interest among political actors is the driving force of political life and public policy. There are many variations within this approach (see Hindmoor 2006), with a particular emphasis on party positioning in relation to the electorate (Downs 1957), coalition building (Riker 1962) and bureaucratic growth (Niskanen 1971). Writing within this broad tradition, de Mesquita et al. (2003: 8), in *The Logic of Political Survival*, suggest that their: ‘starting point is that every political leader faces the challenge of how to hold onto his or her job. The politics behind survival in office is, we believe, the essence of politics.’ One does not need to be a rational choice adherent to accept that there is a grain of truth in this statement. Once again, it points us in the direction of needing to take seriously that, in terms of policy success, policies have political consequences and that political success is a fundamental component of broader policy success. In accordance with one of the continual themes of this chapter, not everyone agrees what success looks like (in this case, political success), but that is something we need to factor into our discussions in defining success.

**Conclusion: taking stock of existing literature**

This chapter has demonstrated that academics and policy practitioners often disagree and struggle with the nature of success, even if their concerns are not success *per se* but, rather, surrogates such as improvement and value. Yet, they provide a base on which to build. Five broad sets of issues have emerged in this review of the literature.

First, it is clear that success, whether explicit or implicit, means different things to different people. For some it is policy improvement, while for others it is achieving public value, or meeting benchmarks, or simply the faithful execution of government policy. A coherent framework is needed to accommodate and draw together these widely differing perspectives. Second, there are differing views of what aspects of a policy can succeed. Some, such as the rational choice and political survival literature, focus particularly on political success, while much conventional policy analysis literature concentrates on success related to programmes. Others, ranging from incrementalists to the new breed of deliberative democrats, emphasize ‘good process’. Again, a policy success framework is needed that can accommodate such diversity. Third, success is not
‘all or nothing’. While some literature, especially that dealing with success and failure, alludes to grey areas between the extremes of success and failure, a robust analytical framework needs to capture a range of possible outcomes, many of which will contradict one another.

Fourth, there are many different views, usually implicit, on how success can be achieved. For some, such as adherents to rational evaluation and traditional policy analysis, success is a product of a careful, comprehensive and non-politicized examination of policy problems and solutions. For others, success is a product of careful political strategy or, in the case of rational choice, the product of the pursuit of self-interest. A comprehensive examination of success strategies needs to be able to link together all these differing perspectives, whether we find them agreeable or not. Fifth, and finally, a series of issues has emerged that provide food for thought. How can a policy be successful if many abhor it? Are the conditions for success the same in every policy context? How stable is success once it has been achieved? These issues and more will be tackled in subsequent chapters.