

Summary

PhD-thesis

Policy Alienation: Analyzing the experiences
of public professionals with new policies

Proefschrift

Beleidsvervreemding: Een analyse van de
ervaringen van publieke professionals met
nieuw beleid

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INTRODUCTION

We started **Chapter 1** by arguing that, currently, there is an intense debate concerning professionals in the public sector (Ackroyd et al., 2007; Currie et al., 2009; Emery & Giaouque, 2003; Hebson et al., 2003). Authors such as Duyvendak et al. (2006:35) and Freidson (2001) note that many of the pressures that professionals face are related to the difficulties they have with the policies they have to implement. An illustrative example is the introduction of a new reimbursement policy (known as Diagnosis Related Groups - in Dutch ‘Diagnose Behandelings Combinaties’, or DBC’s) in mental healthcare in the Netherlands. In one large-scale survey, as many as nine out of ten professionals wanted this new policy abandoned (Palm et al., 2008). Psychologists even went as far as to openly demonstrate on the street against this policy. A major reason for this was that many could not align their professional values with the content of the policy. The following quotation from a healthcare professional is illustrative (see Chapter 5):

“We experience the DRG policy as a disaster. I concentrate as much as possible on treating my own patients, in order to derive some satisfaction from my work.”

This example is not unique. Overall, several studies are showing increasing identification problems among public professionals toward public policies (Bottery, 1998; Duyvendak et al., 2006; Freidson, 2001; see also Hebson et al., 2003; Pratchett & Wingfield, 1996).

However, although these identification problems have been acknowledged by scholars (Ewalt & Jennings, 2004; May, 2003; B. G. Peters & Pierre, 1998), there is to date no coherent, theory-based framework for analyzing this topic. This study addresses this issue by building a theoretical framework for ‘policy alienation’, building on the concept of work alienation developed in the field of sociology of work and labor. Policy alienation is defined as a general cognitive state of psychological disconnection, from the policy program to be implemented, by a public professional who, on a regular basis, interacts directly with clients.

Studying the policy alienation of public professionals can be highly relevant. Firstly, because, when implementers are unable to identify with a policy, this can negatively influence policy effectiveness and thereby organizational performance (Ewalt & Jennings, 2004; May & Winter, 2009). Secondly, a high degree of policy alienation can also affect the quality of interactions between professionals and citizens, which may eventually lower the output legitimacy of government (Bekkers et al., 2007). A better understanding of policy alienation, its measurement, and the influencing factors and effects is therefore important for policymakers and managers if they want to develop policies that will be more readily accepted by implementing public professionals. In this study, we focus upon this new concept of ‘policy alienation’.

Value of this study

This study is interdisciplinary in nature, and aims to contribute to debates in a number of research fields, such as change management and Human Resource Management (HRM). When discussing the theoretical, methodological, and practical values of the study, we focus

on two bodies of work which are paramount for this study: policy implementation literature and public management literature.

Theoretical value - Building a theory on the experiences of public professionals with policies

In the policy implementation literature, both top-down and bottom-up approaches stress that identification by the implementer with the policy is a prerequisite for effective implementation (Hill & Hupe, 2009; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). More recent policy implementation research continues to stress that implementers should be able to identify with the policy they implement (Ewalt & Jennings, 2004; May & Winter, 2009; B. G. Peters & Pierre, 1998). As Ewalt & Jennings (2004:453) noted, “It is clear from the literature there is much that members of an organization can do to stymie policy implementation.”

The policy alienation framework builds upon policy implementation research by emphasizing the crucial role of implementers in determining policy performance. It also adds to contemporary policy implementation research by framing the experiences of public professionals with the policy they have to implement in a coherent framework: that of policy alienation. The building of such a framework is theoretically innovative in the sense that although policy implementation scholars have emphasized the crucial role of the identification of implementers with the policy, few have developed and tested a framework for analyzing this topic (O’Toole, 2000).

Alongside being relevant to policy implementation research, this study also has value for public management, and especially for research concerning the pressures public professionals nowadays face. By applying a policy alienation perspective, we can enhance the understanding on how New Public Management policies (NPM) are experienced by professionals implementing policies. Ackroyd et al. (2007:9) note the dearth of systematic studies on the effects of NPM restructuring. In particular, there are few studies on the NPM experiences of ‘street-level’ professionals. Using the policy alienation perspective, we can examine what really happens on ‘the work floor’.

Methodological value – Quantitatively examining the experiences of public professionals

A second value of this study lies in its quantitative approach, used especially in the second part of the study (Chapters 5-9). To date, most policy implementation studies have had a rather qualitative nature. As O’Toole (2000:269) notes, “the move to multivariate explanation and large numbers of cases exposes the [policy implementation, LT] specialty to new or renewed challenges, which have yet to be addressed fully.” Further, there is also an increasing need to quantify the experiences of public professionals with NPM. To date, most studies on NPM and professionals have similarly also had a rather qualitative nature (examples are Ackroyd et al., 2007; De Ruyter et al., 2008; Thomas & Davies, 2005). One of the strengths of this qualitative research is that it is able to capture the plethora of reasons for increasingly problematic public professional employment such as the quality of line management.

Quantitatively analyzing important research questions - such as the relationship between discretion and NPM (Brodkin, 2007) - can yield new insights, thereby adding to the debate. Some valuable quantitative research on policy implementation and public

management has taken place. However, these studies often failed to use validated scales, although some have applied exploratory factor analyses and reliability techniques to test the quality of their scales. We use scale development techniques to construct validated scales for policy alienation. Further, only validated scales are used in the three quantitative studies on which this study is based. This large-sample quantitative approach can achieve new insights concerning experiences at the ‘street-level’, where public professionals implement governmental policies.

Practical value – Explicitly focusing on the practical usefulness of policy alienation framework

The gap between research and practice in public administration, public management, and policy implementation has been intensively debated (Egeberg, 1994; Graffy, 2008; O’Toole, 2000; O’Toole, 2004). For instance, Bogason and Brans (2008:92) observe that “the weak reception and application of public administration theory in practice suggests that the community of public administration academics may still be producing knowledge whose legitimacy and usefulness is questionable.”

In this study, we explicitly focus on connecting theory with practice. First, as outlined earlier, we will develop a framework which helps in understanding why public professionals do or do not identify with the policies they have to implement, including influencing factors (such as the professional context and the content of the policy) and the consequences (such as resistance to change and job dissatisfaction). The policy alienation framework can be a helpful analytical tool when examining professionals’ resistance to, or compliance with, new policies. Second, we will develop a valid and reliable instrument to measure policy alienation by using scale development techniques (see Chapter 5). Practitioners, such as policymakers and professional associations, can use this policy alienation measurement instrument to analyze the general level of alienation from, or identification with, a new policy by professionals. More specifically, this instrument identifies those dimensions on which professionals have problems with a new policy, for instance that they feel that they do not have enough autonomy during policy implementation (high operational powerlessness) or that they cannot see the benefits of the policy for their own clients (high client meaninglessness). This can help identify appropriate interventions to reduce the degree of policy alienation, thereby countering the problems professionals encounter when implementing policies. Further, a step-by-step guide for practitioners who want to employ the policy alienation framework to study the experiences of public professionals with a particular policy is developed (see Appendix 1).

Research questions and corresponding answers

Based on the theoretical, methodological, and practical values this study aimed to satisfy, we developed research questions and defined the outline of this study. This study aims to answer the following main research question:

How can the policy alienation of public professionals be conceptualized and measured, and what are its influencing factors and effects?

The main research question breaks down into four research questions:

1. How to conceptualize the policy alienation of public professionals?
2. What are the main factors that influence policy alienation?
3. How can policy alienation be measured?
4. What are the main effects of policy alienation?

RQ 1 – Answer: Policy alienation can best be conceptualized using five sub-dimensions

The first research question concerns how to conceptualize policy alienation. In **Chapter 2**, a historical overview of the alienation concept was provided, by examining the use of the alienation concept by authors such as Hegel, Marx, Fromm, and Weber. From these analyses, we concluded that the concepts of alienation, bureaucracy, and policy implementation are inherently connected. Based on this, **Chapter 3** conceptualized policy alienation. Building upon insights from the literature on work alienation and public administration literature a first policy alienation framework was developed, which was then tested in an exploratory study of insurance physicians and labor experts. As with work alienation, policy alienation was seen as a multidimensional concept. Viewed from this perspective, it has similarities with some well-known concepts in the social sciences, such as public service motivation (PSM), organizational commitment, and not surprisingly work alienation.

We conceptualized a policy alienation framework based on theoretical insights from the work alienation and public administration literatures, and explored and tested this framework in a number of empirical analyses (for an overview, see Chapter 10). We concluded that a policy framework consisting of two main dimensions (powerlessness and meaninglessness), which could be further broken down into five dimensions (strategic, tactical, and operational powerlessness, plus societal and client meaninglessness) was most appropriate, based on both theoretical arguments and empirical results. The operationalization of this final policy alienation framework is shown in Table 1:

Table 1 Operationalization of policy alienation: the five dimensions

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Examples of high scores</i>
Strategic powerlessness	The perceived influence of professionals on decisions concerning the content of the policy, as captured in rules and regulations.	A professional feeling that the policy is drafted without the help of implementing professionals or professional associations.
Tactical powerlessness	The professionals' perceived influence on decisions concerning the way policy is implemented within their own organization.	Professionals stating that the managers in the organization did not consult them or their colleagues when designing the policy implementation process.
Operational powerlessness	The perceived degree of freedom in making choices concerning the sort, quantity, and quality of sanctions and rewards on offer when implementing the policy.	Answering 'fully agree' to a survey question on whether the professional feels that their autonomy during the implementation process was lower than it should be.
Societal meaningfulness	The perception of professionals concerning the added value of the policy to socially relevant goals.	Stating in an interview that "I agree with the policy goal of enhancing transparency, but I do not see how this policy helps to achieve this goal."
Client meaningfulness	The professionals' perceptions of the added value of them implementing a policy for their own clients.	A professional who argues that a particular policy seriously impinges on their clients' privacy.

RQ 2 – Answer: Context and content are important in explaining policy alienation

The second research question asked which factors are important in explaining policy alienation. **Chapter 3** and **Chapter 4** considered a number of influencing factors. These can be classified into two broad categories: factors related to the context in which policy implementation takes place and factors related to the content of the policy.

Three contextual factors could be distinguished based on theoretical arguments and empirical analyses. First, the professional context, relating to the level of the professionalism of the implementing public professionals. One indicator of professionalism is having a strong professional association. We showed that, the weaker the professional association, the greater the strategic powerlessness experienced by the implementing professionals. For example, for the insurance physicians and the labor experts, the weak positions of their professional associations contributed to the feeling of many physicians and labor experts that they were strategically powerless.

Next to the professional context, the political context was also found to be an important factor explaining the degree of policy alienation felt by the public professionals. The political context was sometimes characterized by a multitude of policy changes. Too many changes contribute to feelings of societal meaningfulness. The following quote from an interviewed physician illustrates this:

“Lately there have been so many changes: first the adjustments to the ASB, now the law regarding work and income. It happens all the time. I do not

feel ‘connected’ with politicians. Often they propose things which are not well thought out, but which have to be implemented right away.”

The third and final contextual factor we distinguished was the organizational context of the implementing professionals. Policy implementation by public professionals happens in and around organizations, which means that the organizational context is clearly able to influence the way in which public professionals experience new policies. For instance, an organization with a number of NPM characteristics could heighten the degree of policy alienation felt by the professionals.

Alongside these contextual factors, factors related to the policy itself influenced the degree of policy alienation. Firstly, the type of policy goal influenced the policy alienation felt by the public professionals, most notably in terms of their societal meaninglessness. Goals focusing on efficiency seemed to heighten societal meaninglessness, while quality-based goals were perceived in a more positive light. Next to the goals of the policy, the actual content of the policy also influenced the degree of policy alienation. Most importantly, the strictness of the rules influenced policy alienation.

RQ 3 – Answer: Policy alienation can be measured using a 26-item measurement instrument

The third research question considered how to measure policy alienation. **Chapter 5** dealt with this research question extensively, using a case study of the implementation, by psychiatrists, psychotherapists, and psychologists, of Diagnosis Related Groups in Dutch mental healthcare. To be able to measure the five sub-dimensions of policy alienation identified, scale development techniques, as described by DeVellis (2003; see also Hinkin, 1998), were followed. Based on these scale-development steps and a survey of 478 mental healthcare professionals, an initial 23-item policy alienation measurement instrument was constructed. In a second survey of 1,317 mental healthcare professionals (Chapters 7 and 8), we tested this developed scale and were largely satisfied with its appropriateness. At this stage, we decided to construct three additional items for strategic powerlessness as that scale was rather short. Finally, this 26-item measurement instrument was again tested on another policy in a different context, here with Dutch midwives implementing the twenty-week ultrasound (SEO) policy (Chapter 9). Based on the analysis of a survey of 790 midwives, we concluded that this 26-item measurement instrument for policy alienation was adequate. That is, based on theoretical arguments and empirical analyses, a policy alienation measurement instrument was constructed that consisted of 26 items. More details are provided in Appendix 1 (Table 1.1).

RQ 4 – Answer: Policy alienation affects willingness to implement policies, behavioral support for the policy, and job satisfaction

The final research question investigates the effects of policy alienation. In this study, we found that policy alienation affected three important outcome variables: willingness to implement public policies, behavioral support for the policy, and job satisfaction.

The influence of policy alienation on the willingness to implement public policies was described in **Chapter 6** and **Chapter 7**. Throughout change management history, it has been fairly consistently claimed that a crucial condition for success is that employees are willing to implement the change (Carnall, 2007; Higgs & Rowland, 2005; Judson, 1991). Based on literature from the change management and public administration streams, we constructed a theoretical model linking five dimensions of policy alienation to change willingness. This model was tested in a survey of 478 mental healthcare professionals implementing a new reimbursement policy. The model worked adequately in that the policy alienation dimensions, together with conventional control variables, explained over 40% of the variance in change willingness.

More specifically, three sub-dimensions of policy alienation were found to influence willingness to implement policies. Of the powerlessness sub-dimensions, operational powerlessness was significant: the more that mental healthcare professionals felt they had little autonomy when implementing the DRG policy (i.e. a high operational powerlessness), the less supportive they were of this policy. Strategic and tactical powerlessness were however insignificant. The most important factor in explaining willingness to implement policies turned out to be societal meaningfulness: the perception of professionals concerning the added value of a policy to socially relevant goals. Professionals who felt that a policy did not contribute to the stated goals (such as efficiency and transparency) were far less willing to implement it. Further, when these professionals felt that the DRG policy was not contributing to the welfare of their own clients (high client meaningfulness), their willingness to implement this policy again decreased.

Next, we studied behavioral support for the policy, using a case study of midwives implementing the twenty-week ultrasound policy in **Chapter 9**. Behavioral support for a change (in this case, a policy) reflects the actions that employees take to support or resist a change (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). For instance, professionals may go above and beyond what is formally required to help ensure the success of a policy by promoting it to others. This is termed 'championing'. At the other end of the continuum, professionals can demonstrate strong opposition to a new policy by engaging in overt behaviors that are intended to ensure that the policy fails. As expected, the policy alienation dimensions have a strong influence on behavioral support for a policy. In other words, when professionals feel that they have no influence in the shaping of a policy (powerlessness) or think the policy is not beneficial for society in general or for their own clients (meaninglessness), they will show resistant behavior toward the policy, such as holding demonstrations. As with the willingness to implement the policy, we found that the level of policy meaningfulness experienced was more important in explaining behavioral support for a policy than the level of policy powerlessness.

In **Chapter 8**, we analyzed the relationship between policy powerlessness and job satisfaction. Both operational powerlessness and tactical powerlessness negatively influenced job satisfaction. That is, when professionals feel that they have no autonomy during the implementation of a policy, they will be less satisfied with their jobs. Further, if they do not feel that they can influence the way in which their organization implements the policy, they will be less satisfied. In addition, we found that the effect of tactical powerlessness on job satisfaction was strongest among professionals working in a highly politicized environment.

Offering some influence is likely to reduce insecurity and increase the sense of control, and this is especially important in organizations when there is a lot of insecurity due to the many political games being played (Witt et al., 2000). This emphasizes the contextual nature of policy implementation by public professionals. In some organizations, it will be more beneficial to engage professionals in the way a policy is implemented than in others.

Out six main conclusions and corresponding recommendations

We can now examine the main conclusions drawn from this study. Here, we move beyond the answers to the main research questions and relate our results to literature and to practice. We have already emphasized that this study followed an interdisciplinary approach using different bodies of literature. The main contributions of this study similarly lie in a range of research fields, but primarily in the fields of public management and policy implementation.

Conclusion 1 – NPM is influential, but a broader view is necessary

This study started with the statement that New Public Management practices put pressures on public professionals in service delivery. We indeed found that NPM influences the degree of policy alienation experienced by public professionals. For example, the more that management concretizes a policy by focusing on performance measurements and output controls, the greater the degree of powerlessness and meaninglessness experienced. In this way, we provide further evidence that NPM-type performance management systems can have undesirable effects (P. Smith, 1995; Van Thiel & Leeuw, 2002).

However, we should note that NPM is a loose term, and no two authors list exactly the same features (Hood & Peters, 2004:268). Further, the characteristics credited to NPM can be inherently conflicting in themselves (Hood, 1991). Moreover, even if we do try to define NPM, for example by using the seven components proposed by Hood (1991), we see that there are factors that influence the degree of policy alienation that are not directly related to NPM. For instance, we found that both the status of the profession and the power of the professional association influence the degree of policy alienation experienced. As such, NPM is clearly not the only factor that puts pressure on professionals. Next, we noticed that the NPM pressures were not universally perceived. For instance, some physicians stated that they could effectively cope with the increased performance pressures by communicating with their manager. Concluding, although NPM is an important factor in influencing the experiences of public professionals with new policies, a broader view is necessary.

In terms of research, this conclusion seems at odds with the statements of some authors (for example Emery & Giaque, 2003; J. Peters & Pouw, 2005) that NPM is the major, and maybe only, factor that pressurizes professionals. Our empirical analyses are more in line with other authors (for example Exworthy & Halford, 1998; Kirkpatrick et al., 2005; Leicht & Fennell, 2001; Noordegraaf, 2007; Noordegraaf, 2008) who urge one to look for larger forces at work, such as the emancipation of clients, the introduction of new technologies, and the demands posed by politicians and policymakers. We can add a number of factors to this list, such as the political and professional contexts (see Figure 10.1).

To practitioners, such as politicians and policymakers, we also would recommend incorporating this broader view. Alongside the degree of NPM, they should also consider the

professional and political contexts in which implementation takes place, as well as the policy goals and the rules and regulations of the policy (see Figure 10.1). For instance, policymakers could choose to involve professional associations more intensively, or to relax the rules in order to leave professionals some discretion in applying the rules on a case-by-case basis. Further, we found that introducing numerous policy changes increases the sense of policy alienation, as professionals feel overwhelmed by the changes: a case of change fatigue (Judson, 1991). We therefore advise policymakers to limit the number of policy changes, in line with recommendations made concerning education reforms (Parliamentary Commission Education Reforms, 2008b).

Conclusion 2 – Autonomy remains critical for public professionals

In our study, we analyzed operational powerlessness during policy implementation, an aspect often referred to as discretion (especially when applied to street-level public servants) or autonomy during policy implementation (when talking about professionals). We observed that operational powerlessness, or discretion, strongly influences both the willingness to implement new policies and the job satisfaction felt by public professionals. According to the professionals in our studies, their degree of operational powerlessness was quite high, making it more difficult to adjust treatment to the specific needs of a patient. As one professional argued (from the open answers to a survey, see Chapter 7):

“Patients receive a ‘label’ from a classification system [...] Sometimes a patient fits into a ‘depression’ but really needs something more than a neat ‘Cognitive Behavioral Therapy protocol of ten sessions’. If time and number of sessions rather than content start leading, it becomes impossible to provide patient-centered care.”

Furthermore, we showed in Chapter 8 that operational powerlessness has a strongly negative influence on the job satisfaction of public professionals. Thus, when professionals feel that they have no discretion during the implementation of a policy, they will be less willing to implement that policy *and* be less satisfied with their jobs. Thus, overall, we have shown that a low degree of discretion has negative consequences, including on the willingness to implement public policies and on the job satisfaction of public professionals.

This conclusion adds significance to statements in the current debate on pressured professionals, where one sees claims made by leading authors such as Freidson (2001) that the autonomy of professionals is diminishing. Further, it seems that the notion of discretion remains crucial on the policy implementation level (Elmore, 1985; Hill & Hupe, 2009; Lipsky, 1980). High levels of discretion can enhance policy performance by increasing the willingness to implement, with implementers being given the opportunity to adapt the policy to the situations of their clients (Hill & Hupe, 2009:52, see also Lipsky, 1980).

For policymakers and public managers, this means that they should be careful in reducing the autonomy of the public professionals who have to implement a policy. We are not saying that they should never impinge on professional autonomy, since autonomy can have substantial disadvantages, such as empire building and inefficiency (Deakin, 1994; Lipsky, 1980). What we are cautioning is that diminishing the autonomy of professionals

should be a deliberate, informed choice, taking account of the possible advantages and disadvantages. Further, the negative consequences on the job satisfaction of public professionals should be of concern for both the individual employee and for the organization as a whole (Van de Voorde, 2009), as job satisfaction can influence organizational citizenship, turnover, and job performance. Hence, any reduction in autonomy (genuine or perceived) could have severe effects on the individual, policy, and organizational levels.

Conclusion 3 – Public professionals are not against business goals, but question the ways and means to reach such goals

The third conclusion of this study concerns the attitudes of professionals toward business values, such as efficiency and client choice. In the case study on Diagnosis Related Groups, the healthcare professionals surveyed (over 1,700 in total) did not on average oppose the business goals of this policy. If anything, rather the opposite, they welcomed goals such as efficiency and increasing client choice (Tummers, 2011b). For instance, the average score for the item ‘In my opinion, enhancing the efficiency of mental healthcare is a goal very worthy of pursuing’ was 8.1 (on a 1 to 10 scale).

However, although the professionals did agree with the *goals* of the policy, they did not think that the *means* (i.e. the DRG policy) would achieve them. The average scores for agreeing with the goals and achieving the goals were very different: for agreeing with the goals of efficiency and of transparency they were quite high (8.1 and 7.8 respectively), while the professionals did not think that these goals would be met (3.4 and 3.6 respectively).

On the basis of these findings, it is unwarranted to claim that public professionals are against business goals as such. This is an interesting observation as it contradicts research in the field of public administration. Some New Public Management scholars argue that business goals, such as efficiency, are, by definition, not welcomed by professionals (Emery & Giaouque, 2003; Van den Brink et al., 2006). On the contrary, we found that professionals are unwilling to implement a policy not because it focuses on business goals, but because it would not achieve them.

Based on this, we would advise policy implementation scholars and change management scholars to examine whether the means provided are sufficient to achieve the goals of a change. This means that they should examine the *content* of a change. For instance, the DRG policy was structured in such a way that it gave rise to many perverse financial incentives, making it very difficult for the policy to achieve some of its goals, such as efficiency. Today, change management scholars in particular do not examine the content of a change, but focus primarily on the processes (such as communication, training) involved in achieving a change (Fernandez & Rainey, 2006; Holt et al., 2006). We have shown that this can sometimes be inadequate in explaining the success of a policy or change. We hope that future research will therefore explicitly take account of the content of a change or policy.

This conclusion also has implications for practitioners. First, for policymakers and change agents implementing policies, it indicates that business goals such as increasing efficiency or client choice can indeed be seen as valuable goals by implementers. As such, policymakers and change agents could more openly state that these are the goals being pursued and, further, they could involve professionals in debates on how to achieve these goals. Further, practitioners could also enhance their understanding of the content of

particular policies, and the associated behavior that could be anticipated from implementing professionals. One way to do this would be to develop scenarios for the behavior of implementing professionals given the rules of the policy. Based on this, practitioners could modify policy rules before introducing them to alter the behavioral incentives for implementing professionals. Nowadays, this is often only done ex-post, for instance one year after a policy has been in place.

Conclusion 4 – Focus upon enhancing meaningfulness, not influence

In the policy implementation, change management, and general HRM literatures, there is a lot of emphasis on employee participation and influence (the opposite of powerlessness). In this study, we examined the impact of powerlessness and meaningfulness on both the policy level (based on the policy alienation concept) and on the work level (based on the work alienation concept). We found that, for all the outcome variables, the impact of societal and client meaningfulness was stronger than the impact of strategic and tactical powerlessness. For instance, we found that the willingness to implement a policy and behavioral support for a policy is more dependent on the level of policy meaningfulness experienced than the degree of policy powerlessness. Hence, for public professionals it is more important to see the logic of a new policy than to have the feeling of being able to influence its shaping. Further, we found that work-level indicators such as work effort and intention to leave were related more strongly to work meaningfulness than to work powerlessness.

Based on the results of our study, we feel we should nuance the impacts of employee influence on the strategic and tactical levels (operational powerlessness, or autonomy, however, remains crucial, see conclusion 2). That is, we would urge scholars to more intensively consider the *meaninglessness* dimension. Future research could usefully look on two levels. First, it could examine the meaningfulness of a specific object, such as the meaningfulness of a specific policy or of an organizational change. Second, scholars could study the meaningfulness felt by professionals, or other employees, on the general, work, level.

We would advise practitioners to focus their attention on the perceived meaningfulness of work or of a policy, rather than focus on aspects of powerlessness. It seems that concentrating on aspects of participation or powerlessness alone is ineffective. Participation, if you believe that the policy rules and regulations are already set, offers little. If participation is to be practiced, it should be a *means* to enhance the meaningfulness of a policy - not a goal in itself. For instance, policymakers and managers could arrange work sessions with professionals or professional associations to discuss a new policy before it is fully defined such that it can be adapted based on the outcomes of these sessions. In this way, participation can help to draft a better policy, which in turn will enhance its meaningfulness.

Conclusion 5 – Policy content, organizational context, and personality characteristics are all influential

The fifth conclusion refers to three groups of factors that influence the willingness to implement a public policy: the policy content (what?), the organizational context (where?), and personality characteristics (who?). We found that these three groups of factors were all

important in explaining the willingness of professionals to implement public policies. The policy alienation variables (grouped under policy content and organizational context) proved to be most influential. This shows that other factors, alongside policy alienation, also influence the willingness to implement a policy. For instance, the personalities of the psychiatrists, psychologists, and psychotherapists implementing the DRG policy did, to some extent, explain why they resisted the policy: the more rebellious mental health professionals were less willing to implement DRGs.

In general terms, this conclusion suggests that, in order to increase understanding of public policy implementation, scholars should try to include multiple factors in explaining the willingness or reluctance of public professionals to implement policies. An interdisciplinary approach proved adequate in our individual cases.

For practitioners, this conclusion implies that many factors play a part in explaining willingness to implement public policies. The most important factors are related to the policy itself, such as the associated operational powerlessness, and the societal and client meaninglessness attached to it. Practitioners should first and foremost assess which aspects of the policy are likely to influence the willingness or resistance of professionals. Second, they should look at the organizational context in which the professionals are working. Finally, policymakers and managers could examine the personality characteristics of the professionals involved although these characteristics are only influential to a very limited extent, adding only 2% to the explained variance (see Chapter 7). Hence, it seems that resistance is largely not rooted in someone's personal characteristics. This is good news for policymakers, managers, and change agents who want to gain acceptance for a new policy.

Conclusion 6 – The developed policy alienation framework is appropriate

Our final and central conclusion relates to the developed policy alienation framework. In Chapter 2, we concentrated on the historical development of the alienation concept. In Chapter 3, we discussed more recent works that consider alienation and combined this with public administration literature to conceptualize the policy alienation of public professionals. We then tested the framework using a pair of case studies: insurance physicians and labor experts implementing a new policy on re-examining welfare clients (Chapter 3 and 4); and secondary school teachers implementing a new policy called 'The Second Phase' (Chapter 4).

We strengthened the methodological basis of the policy alienation framework by developing its measurement using scale development techniques. We addressed common methodological considerations such as reliability and a number of validity types (Chapter 5). Based on the scale-development, some additional strengthening of the scale (Chapter 7) and further testing of the scale in a different context with a policy which was positively received by the professionals (Chapter 9), a 26-item policy alienation measurement instrument was constructed which was shown to be psychometrically sound.

The developed scale for policy alienation was then used to investigate possible effects of policy alienation. On the policy level, we studied its effects on willingness to implement public policies and on behavioral support for a policy. First we showed that the dimensions of policy alienation strongly affect both the willingness to implement public policies (Chapters 6, 7, and 9) and the behavioral support for the policy (Chapter 9). In Chapter 7, we demonstrated that the policy alienation dimensions were the most important variables in

explaining willingness to implement a policy. On the work level, Chapter 8 showed that tactical and operational powerlessness influenced the job satisfaction of professionals.

Furthermore, we showed that policy alienation was indeed different from work alienation. In Chapter 3, we had argued that the policy alienation and work alienation concepts were distinct. Most importantly, we argued that policy alienation related to alienation from the policy being implemented, rather than from the job being done. In Chapter 9, we empirically showed that policy alienation and work alienation were indeed different concepts. In general, we can conclude, based on theoretical arguments, methodological soundness, and practical testing, that the framework derived is appropriate for assessing policy alienation.

1

**HOW CAN I USE THE POLICY ALIENATION
FRAMEWORK IN RESEARCH, IN CONSULTANCY
OR AS A PRACTITIONER? FIVE BASIC STEPS**

1.1 INTRODUCING THE HOW-TO GUIDE FOR SCHOLARS, CONSULTANTS, AND OTHER PRACTITIONERS

In this appendix, we will demonstrate how the policy alienation framework can be used by scholars, consultants, and other practitioners, thereby increasing its practical applicability. Before we start, we should note that this ‘how-to guide’ should be viewed critically for each specific situation, as each is likely to have its own peculiarities, for example in terms of organizational context, the type of professionals doing the implementing, and in which phase of the policy implementation one is wanting to use the policy alienation framework. We hope that it will prove a useful tool for scholars, consultants, and other practitioners who want to increase their understanding of how professionals experience changes such as a new policy.

1.2 STEP 1 – UNDERSTAND THE POLICY ALIENATION FRAMEWORK

First of all, a basic understanding of the policy alienation framework is required. A good reading of Chapter 1 can provide such an understanding. Policy alienation is defined as a general cognitive state of psychological disconnection, from the policy program to be implemented, by a public professional who, on a regular basis, interacts directly with clients. We conceptualized our policy alienation framework based on theoretical insights from the work alienation and public administration literature streams, and explored and tested this framework in a number of empirical analyses. Based on this, we constructed a definitive theoretical framework for policy alienation, consisting of two dimensions and five sub-dimensions, as shown in Figure A1.1 below:

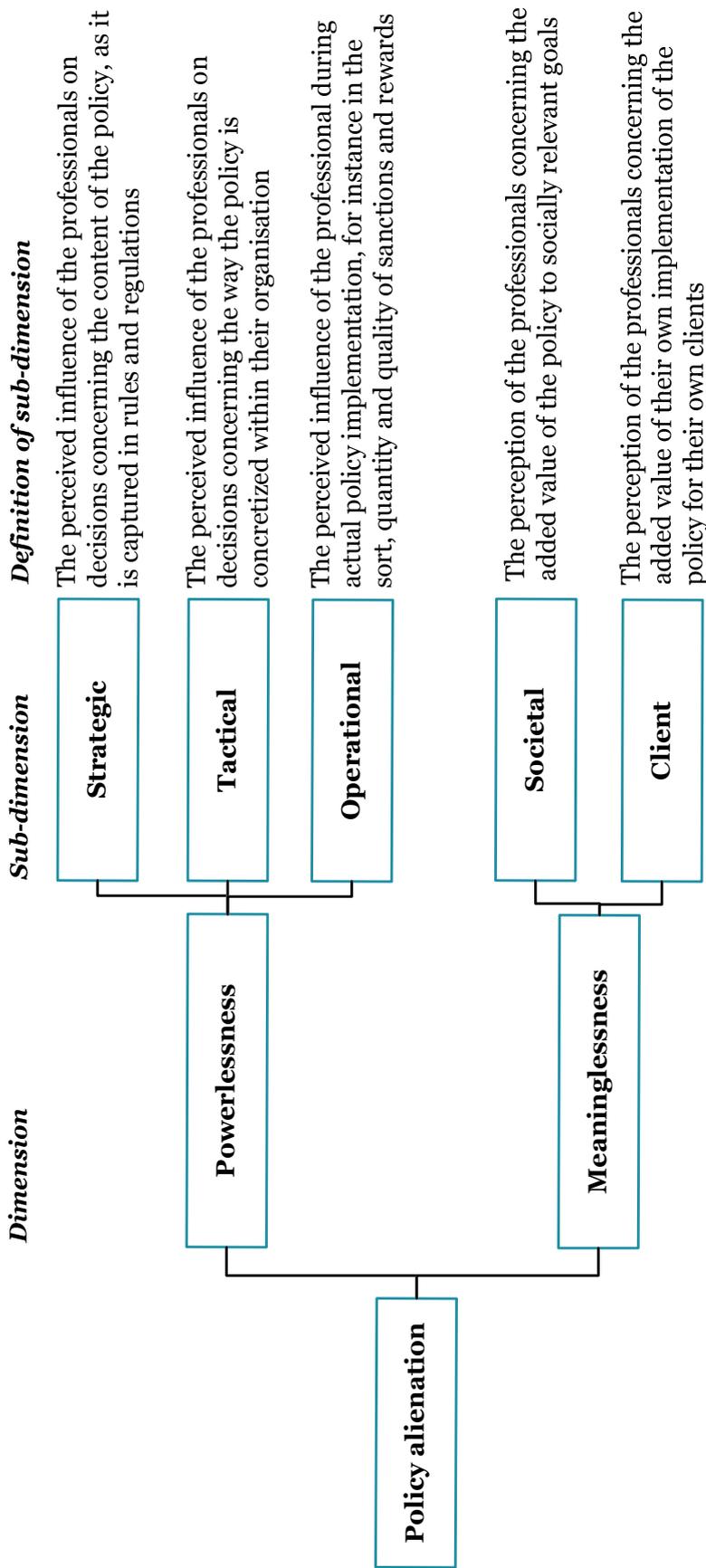


Figure A1.1 The policy alienation concept, including definitions of the sub-dimensions

1.3 STEP 2 – ASSESS THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUR CASE FIT THE POLICY ALIENATION FRAMEWORK

Once you have a basic understanding of the policy alienation framework, you should examine the extent to which the policy and its implementers fit the criteria needed to use the policy alienation framework. If the fit is not perfect, you can consider thoughtfully adapting the policy alienation framework so that it better fits your situation. We would advise you to discuss the adapted policy alienation framework with some policy alienation experts, and also experts from the case you wish to study (see also Step 4). For example, if you want to analyze a specific change (such as a new IT system or a merger) in a private organization, you should first analyze and discuss the policy alienation framework with numerous experts to ensure that it fits the case in hand.

Criterion 1 – Is the policy captured in national rules or regulations?

The first criterion is that the policy should be captured in *national* rules and regulations. A number of sub-dimensions of policy alienation explicitly focus on the national level. For instance, strategic powerlessness examines the professionals' perceived degree of influence concerning the content of the policy, as this is captured in national rules and regulations.

Criterion 2 – Is the policy being implemented by public professionals?

The second criterion is that the implementers of the policy should be public professionals. Gabe, Bury, and Elston (2004:163) note that: “to describe an occupation as a ‘profession’ may be simply to identify it as a particular kind of occupation, typically one with high status and high rewards, requiring long formal training and delivering a personal service” (see Section 1.2). Public professionals by definition work in the public sector, which can be broadly defined as “those parts of the economy that are either in state ownership or under contract to the state, plus those parts that are regulated and/or subsidized in the public interest” (Flynn, 2007:2). This definition covers physicians, teachers, and judges; and the policy alienation framework is tailored towards such public professionals. For example, the sub-dimension of operational powerlessness (discretion) looks at the perceived degree of freedom in making choices concerning the type, quantity, and quality of sanctions and rewards on offer when implementing a policy. While this is an important topic for public professionals, it is less so for other workers such as cashiers and desk officers. Further, the professionals should be public professionals since the sub-dimension of societal meaningfulness examines the value added by the policy to socially relevant goals. This is more relevant for public professionals such as physicians and teachers than for, say, lawyers or notaries.

Criterion 3 – Can the policy be clearly distinguished from other policies?

To measure the degree of policy alienation, the influencing factors, and the onward effects properly, it is essential that the policy can be clearly distinguished from other policies. This is one reason why, in our case studies, we chose to examine Diagnosis Related Groups in

mental healthcare rather than, for example, the new Health Insurance Law (Zorgverzekeringswet). The Health Insurance Law was very widespread and interconnected with other laws, and it would therefore have been much harder for both ourselves and the involved professionals to distinguish which aspects were truly part of it.

Criterion 4 – Do the implementing public professionals have opinions regarding the policy?

The fourth and final criterion is that the public professionals targeted should have opinions regarding the policy. For this to happen, a policy needs to substantially influence the public professional, whether in positive, negative, or other ways. If a policy is insignificant for the professionals, and the professionals consequently do not have any opinions regarding this policy, it becomes meaningless to try to determine the level of alienation towards this policy.

1.4 STEP 3 – IDENTIFY YOUR GOAL IN USING THE POLICY ALIENATION FRAMEWORK

Once you are convinced that you can use the policy alienation framework in your situation, and you have adapted the framework if required to fit your situation, you should ask yourself why the policy alienation framework is to be used. Possible reasons for using the policy alienation framework in the scientific community are:

1. To develop theoretical insights by examining the relationship of policy alienation with another concepts, such as resistance to change, professionalism, professional values, Public Service Motivation, or vitality
2. To enhance the empirical understanding of a situation by studying a particular policy in a particular context
3. To develop methodological insights by using confirmatory factor analysis with data obtained through the policy alienation framework in a new context
4. To develop methodological insights by examining the discriminant and convergent validities of the policy alienation framework
5. To compare the extent of policy alienation across different policy fields, professions, or countries

Some further possibilities for using the policy alienation framework in practice include:

1. To measure the reasons why professionals are against a specific policy (or a change), and use these insights to develop interventions for decreasing this resistance
2. To measure the reasons why professionals are against a specific policy, and then use these insights to strengthen and alter the design of a policy (for instance in a pilot project)
3. To examine the way a particular change in policy affects the attitudes of professionals towards the policy (a 'before and after' comparison)
4. To measure the attitudes of professionals to a particular policy, and use the insights to nuance or change existing opinions in the political or organizational debate

5. To benchmark organizations based on the degree of policy alienation found and develop corresponding ‘good-practices’

The reasons for deciding to use the policy alienation framework should guide the timing of when you employ it (for instance at the beginning or at the end of the policy implementation process). Further, this will influence the choice of an appropriate method as discussed in the next step.

1.5 STEP 4 – CHOOSE YOUR METHOD AND DISCUSS IT WITH A NUMBER OF EXPERTS

Based on your goal, you have to decide which method is best suited to achieving it. For instance, if you wanted to benchmark organizations based on the degree of policy alienation, a survey would be appropriate. On the other hand, if you want to derive a deep understanding of a particular policy in a particular context, a document analysis coupled with interviews and group discussions may be more appropriate.

Interview protocols have been prepared for *qualitative* methods such as interviewing or group discussions. If you apply a *quantitative* method, you can use the validated scales for policy alienation dimensions. A Dutch version of the validated scales can be found in the Dutch summary. The interview protocol and the validated scales are shown below (in English).

The policy alienation framework is a general framework that can be used in different contexts, such as a new national policy to be implemented by Canadian nurses or a new European policy concerning modified peer-reviewing guidelines to be implemented by European academics. Given that every situation is to some extent unique, we would urge you to discuss any developed interview protocol or questionnaire with several experts in the field. We would also advise you to contact policy alienation experts to discuss the decisions you have made. This will increase the reliability and validity of your study.

If you have chosen to conduct survey research, you should start by entering the template forms of the policy alienation items in your survey document. Templates allow you to specify an item by replacing the original general phrases with more specific ones that better fit your research context. This makes it easier for the respondents to understand items, as they are better tailored to their context, and this, in turn, increases reliability and content validity. An example of how this works is shown in 1.5.1 below. You should also check whether the template items you use in the questionnaire are appropriate for the given field by interviewing a number of field experts, as otherwise you might not achieve any increase in reliability and validity.

1.5.1 Quantitative analyses: Policy alienation measurement instrument

Based on the scale-development steps described in this thesis, a final version of the policy alienation measurement instrument, consisting of 26-items, was constructed. This measurement instrument is shown in Table A1.1.

Table A1.1 Items in the policy alienation measurement instrument

<i>Policy alienation measurement instrument</i>
<p>Strategic powerlessness</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In my opinion, <u>professionals</u> had too little power to influence the <u>policy</u> 2. We <u>professionals</u> were completely powerless during the introduction of the <u>policy</u> 3. <u>Professionals</u> could not at all influence the development of the <u>policy</u> at the national level (Minister and Ministry of <u>X</u>, National Government) 4. On a national level, <u>professionals</u> could influence how the <u>policy</u> was set up (R) 5. <u>Professionals</u>, through their professional associations, actively helped to think with the design of the <u>policy</u> (R) 6. Politicians did not, during the design of the policy, listen to the <u>professionals</u> at all
<p>Tactical powerlessness</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. In my <u>organization</u>, especially <u>professionals</u> could decide how the <u>policy</u> was implemented (R) 8. In my <u>organization</u>, <u>professionals</u> have, through working groups or meetings, taken part in decisions over the execution of the <u>policy</u> (R) 9. The management of my <u>organization</u> should have involved the <u>professionals</u> far more in the execution of the <u>policy</u> 10. <u>Professionals</u> were not listened to about the introduction of the <u>policy</u> in my <u>organization</u> 11. In my <u>organization</u>, <u>professionals</u> could take part in discussions regarding the execution of the <u>policy</u> (R) 12. I and my fellow <u>professionals</u> were completely powerless in the introduction of the <u>policy</u> in my <u>organization</u>
<p>Operational powerlessness</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. I have freedom to decide how to use the <u>policy</u> (R) 14. While working with <u>the policy</u>, I can be in keeping with the <u>client's</u> needs (R) 15. Working with the <u>policy</u> feels like I am in a harness in which I cannot easily move 16. When I work with the <u>policy</u>, I have to adhere to tight procedures 17. While working with the <u>policy</u>, I cannot sufficiently tailor it to the needs of my <u>clients</u> 18. While working with the <u>policy</u>, I can make my own judgments (R)
<p>Societal meaningfulness</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 19. I think that the <u>policy</u>, in the long term, will lead to <u>goal 1</u> (R) 20. I think that the policy, in the short term, will lead to <u>goal 1</u> (R) 21. I think that the <u>policy</u> has already led to <u>goal 1</u>(R) 22. Overall, I think that the <u>policy</u> leads to <u>goal 1</u> (R)
<p>Client meaningfulness</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 23. With the <u>policy</u> I can better solve the problems of my <u>clients</u> (R) 24. The <u>policy</u> is contributing to the welfare of my <u>clients</u> (R) 25. Because of the <u>policy</u>, I can help <u>clients</u> more efficiently than before (R) 26. I think that the <u>policy</u> is ultimately favorable for my <u>clients</u> (R)

All items use a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree, through disagree, neutral, and agree to strongly agree. In Table A1.1, a number of words are underlined. These are the ‘template’ words. Templates allow researchers to adapt items to their specific situation by replacing general phrases with more specific ones: ones that fit the context of their research. For example, instead of using the terms ‘the policy’, ‘organization’, and ‘professionals’, the researcher can rephrase these items to suit the specific situation, for example replacing them with ‘the DRG policy’, ‘institution’ and ‘mental healthcare professionals’. As an example, one of the template items for tactical powerlessness was:

In my organization, professionals could take part in conversations regarding the execution of the policy.

In our example, this becomes:

In my institution, mental healthcare professionals could take part in conversations regarding the execution of the DRG policy.

If you intend to use the policy alienation items in a survey, you should decide which terms are appropriate. In Table A1.2, we show the terms used in the standard templates, as well as examples of how these terms were altered for two of the specific cases studied.

Table A1.2 Terms and templates in the scale items

Term in standard template	Term used in DRG-policy	Term used in the twenty-week ultrasound policy
Policy/change	DRG policy, or DRGs	Structural ultrasound assessment
Professionals	Mental healthcare professionals	Healthcare professionals
Organization	Institution	Organization
Clients	Patients	Clients (child and parents)
Policy goal	Four goals were identified. Increasing: - Transparency in costs - Transparency in quality - Efficiency - Patient choice among providers	Three goals were identified. Increasing: - Insights into possible defects in the child - Insights into referral opportunities for treatment - Insights into option of abortion up to 24 weeks
Ministry	Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport	Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport

Based on these examples, you can develop your own questionnaire. In this questionnaire, a number of additional scales could be inserted, for example regarding the willingness to implement the policy, personality characteristics, or job satisfaction. Appendix 2 suggests a number of scales which can be used.

1.5.2 Qualitative analysis: Policy alienation interview protocol

This section provides an overview of the main subjects that are covered in an interview protocol for discussing policy alienation. A semi-structured interview protocol is encouraged.

As with a structured interview, a set of themes is selected in advance. However, unlike a structured interview, a semi-structured interview is flexible, allowing new questions to be raised during the interview based on the answers from a respondent. The exact content of the interview will depend, among other things, on the research question, the policy and the sector involved, and on the individual characteristics of the interviewer and interviewee. What is shown here is a very general interview protocol for policy alienation, with a focus on the degree of policy alienation and its influencing factors. More specific interview protocols for the various cases have been developed.

Introduction

- State the goals of the interview and the goal of the research
- Check if audio recording is allowed
- Discuss anonymity issues with respondent
- State general outlines of the research
- Discuss outline of the interview, for example:
 - o The interview concerns the experiences of public professionals with new governmental policy, in this case [here: policy X]. The interview considers (a) to what extent you, as a public professional, can identify with policy X? and (b) which factors influence this identification/alienation with the policy, and (c) what are the effects of this identification/alienation with the policy?

General - Respondent

- General information about the interviewee: Could you please say something about yourself (age, education, profession, number of years in profession, etc.)?
- Role as a professional: What are your experiences as a professional, how do you experience your work?

General – Policy X

Context

- What do you think are the most important changes which have happened as a result of the introduction of Policy X (in general and for implementing professionals in particular)?

Influence on work

- How does this influence your work?

View on policy

- What do you think of policy X?
- Why do think in this way about the policy?

Alienation/identification

- To which extent can you identify with policy X?
- Why can you (not) identify with policy X?

Powerlessness

Strategic powerlessness

- Do you think you, as a group of professionals, could influence decisions concerning the content of policy X, as is captured in rules and regulations?
- What do you think are the main reasons for this?

Tactical powerlessness

- Do you think you, as a group of professionals, could influence decisions concerning the way policy is implemented within your own organization?
- What do you think are the main reasons for this?

Operational powerlessness

- Do you feel that, when implementing policy X, you have sufficient autonomy?
- What do you think are the main reasons for this?

Meaninglessness

Societal meaninglessness

- What do you think are the goals of policy X?
- To what extent do you agree with these goals?
- Do you feel that policy X contributes to achieving these goals?
- What do you think are the main reasons for this?

Client meaninglessness

- Do you feel that you can help your own clients better as a result of policy X?
- What do you think are the main reasons for this?

Document analysis (only for interviews serving as a member check)

- Discuss preliminary results of the document analysis
- Ask respondents if they (a) disagree with certain results, (b) if important results have been missed, (c) if they have any other remarks

Summarizing and concluding remarks

- Summarize the topics discussed in the interview
- Ask whether the respondent has any additional questions/comments
- Ask whether the respondent wants to receive the final report
- Thank respondent for interview

1.6 STEP 5 – DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND REPORTING

After these steps, you can start your data collection and the subsequent research stages such as data analysis and reporting of the results. This will depend on your chosen method and the situation being studied.

We hope that the policy alienation framework provides a fruitful framework for understanding the attitudes regarding a particular change, such as a new policy. Good luck!