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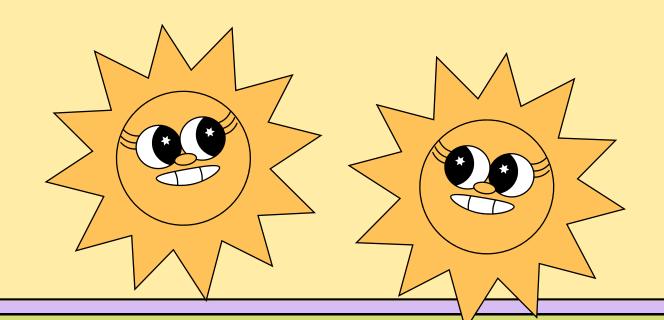
UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC POLICY

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Policy Analysis





Public Policy is whatever governments choose to do or not to do. \diamondsuit



Public Policies may regulate behavior, organize bureaucracies, distribute benefits, or extract taxes or all these things at once. today people expect government to do a great many things for them. Indeed there is hardly any personal or societal problem for which some group will not demand a government solution - that is, a public policy designed to alleviate personal discomfort or societal unease.

Not everything that government does is reflected in hovernmental expenditures. regulatory activity, for example, especially environmental regulations, imposes significant budgets. Nevertheless, government spending is a common indicator of governmental functions and priorities

why study public policy

Political science is also the study of public policy. political science is the study of politic-the study of "who;gets;what;when;and how". It is more than the study of governmental institutions, that is, federalism, separation of powers, checks and balances, judicial review, the powers and duties of Congress, the president, and the courts.

This focus involves a description of the content of public policy; an analysis of the impact of social, economic, and political forces on the content of public policy; an inquiry into the effect of various

Public Policy can be studied for political purposes: to ensure that the nation adopts the "right": policies to achieve the "right" goals.

Policy studies can be undertaken not only for scientific and professional purposes but also to inform political discussion, advance the lavel of political awareness, and improve the quality of public policy.

policy analysis encourages scholars and students to attack critical policy issues with the tools of systematic inquiry

specifically, policy analysis involves

1

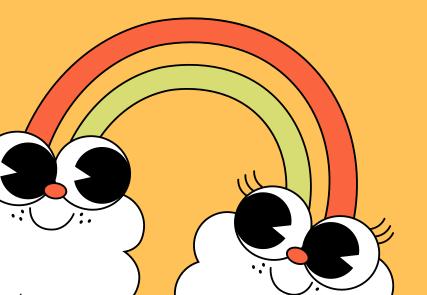
A primary concern with explanation rather than prescription

2

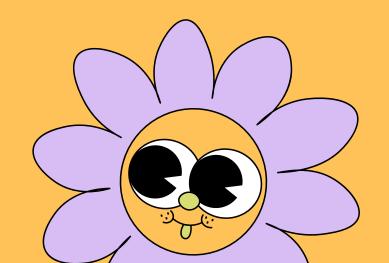
A rigorous search for the causes and consequences of public policies

3

An effort to develop and test general propositions about the causes and consequences of public policy and to accmulate reliable research findings of general relevance











Policy Analysis As Art and Craft

Understanding public policy is both an art and a craft. It is an art because it requires insight creativitie and imagination in identifying societal problems and describing them, in devising public policies that might alleviate them, and then in finding out whether these policies end up making things better or worse.

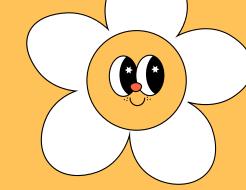
It is a craft because these tasks usually require some knowledge of economics, political science, public administration, sociology, law, and statistics. Policy analysis is really an applied subfield of all of these traditional academic disciplines.

MODELS OF POLITICS

A model is a simplified representation of some aspect of the real world. It may be an actual physical representation a model airplane, for example, or the tabletop build- ings that planners and architects use to show how things will look when proposed projects are completedOr a model may be a diagram-a road map, for example, or a flow chart that political scientists use to show how a bill becomes law.



public policy from the per- spective of the following models:



INSTITUTIONALSM: POLICY AS INSTITUTIONAL OUTPUT

<u>1</u>

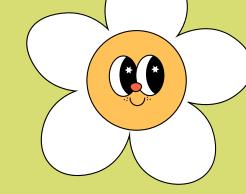
Government institutions give public policy three distinctive characteristics.

First, government lends legitimacy to poli- cies. Second, government policies involve universality. Finally, government monopolizes coercion in society-only government can leitimately imprison violators of its policies .









PROCESS: POLICY AS POLITICAL ACTIVITY

<u>2</u>

Government institutions give public policy One of the main purposes has been to discover patterns of activities-or "processes." Political scientists with an interest in policy have grouped various activities according to their relationship with public policy. The result is a set of policy processes, which usu- ally follow this general outline:distinctive characteristics.

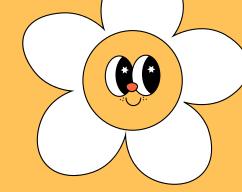
- Problem Identification.
 - Agenda Setting.
 - Policy Formulation.

- Policy Legitimation
- Policy Implementation
 - Policy Evuation









RATIONALISM: POLICY AS MAXIMUM SOSIAL GAIN

3

A rational policy is one that achieves "maximum social gain"; that is, governments should choose policies resulting in gains to society that exceed costs by the greatest amount, and governments should refrain from policies if costs are not exceeded by gains.

Note that there are really two important guidelines in this definition of maxi- mum social gain. First, no policy should be adopted if its costs exceed its benefits.

Second, among policy alternatives, decision makers should choose the policy that pro- duces the greatest benefit over cost.





INCREMENTALAISM: POLICY AS VARIATIONS ON THE PAST

Incrementalism views public policy as a continuation of past government activities with only incremental modifications.

They do this

- first, because they do not have the time, information, or money to inves- tigate all the alternatives to existing policyThe cost of collecting all this information is too great.
- Second, policymakers accept the legitimacy of previous policies because of the uncertainty about the consequences of completely new or different policies
- Third, there may be heavy investments in existing programs (sunk costs), which preclude any really radical change.
- Fourth, incrementalism is politically expedient

GROUP THEORY: POLICY AS GROUP EQUILIBRIUM

ELITE THEORY: POLICY AS ELITE PREFERENCE

- Group theory begins with the proposition that interaction among groups tral fact ofpolitics." Individuals with common interests band together si the cen-maly to press their demands on government. public policy at any given time si the equilibrium reached in the group struggle. This equilibrium si determined by the relative influence of any interest groups. Changes ni the relative influence of any inter- est groups can be expected to result in changes in publicpolicy;
- Elite theory suggests that the people are apathetic and ill informed about public policy, that elites actually shape mass opinion on policy questions more than masses shape elite opinion. Thus, public policy really turns out to be the preferences of elites. Elite theory can be summarized briefly as follow:
 - society is divided into the few who have power and the many who do not.
 - the few who govern are not typical of the masses who are governed
 - the movement of nonelites to elite positions must be slow and continuous maintain stability and avoid revolution

