Journal Post for class on January 28, 2019

1. Five bullet points summarizing your “takeaways” from the Fog of War

Robert S. McNamara spent a significant portion of his professional career as a policymaker on war activities. War is the most extreme example of conflict over ideas. Whether or not to go to war and how to wage a war are perhaps among the most important policy decisions that a government makes. McNamara was a principal actor in forming policy on the Vietnam War, which many consider one of the biggest policy mistakes ever made. As such, McNamara’s life serves as a useful case study from which we can draw important insights about the policy process. Five of these insights include the following:

* It’s important to empathize with your opposition because it enables you to understand the motivations of their actions (i.e., their world view), which provides you with the ability to negotiate policy that will incur the least opposition and achieve your primary objectives.
* Relying exclusively on rational decision making approaches focused exclusively on self-interested objectives can produce decisions that impede the achievement of goals and objectives.
* The decisions of policymakers are not entirely driven by self-interest. They are also driven by a sense of responsibility to society.
* Policymakers are human and humans often see what they want to believe.
* Because successful policymaking depends so much on alliances, you should take any lack of support from traditional allies as a signal to re-examine the reasoning that led you to a particular policy stance.

1. A paragraph comparing the view of science presented in Smith and Larimer as articulated by Harold Lasswell and the view presented in the video on the Pursuit of Ignorance.

There are significant differences between Harold Lasswell’s view of science (as explained by Smith & Larimer, 2016) and Stuart Firestein’s view of science presented in the “Pursuit of Ignorance” TEDTalk. Lasswell viewed science as a well-organized, well-structured search for answers to specific problems more akin to putting together a jigsaw puzzle in which success is marked by a clear endpoint where the full picture is completed. Firestein views science as a search for better questions that is more like trying to find a black cat in a room without any light and the possibility that there is no cat in the room at all.

1. One strategy you think would be helpful in overcoming our Political Preference Narrative by achieving a state of “being consciously ignorant,” i.e. activating System 2 thinking

One strategy for activating System 2 thinking to overcome our Political Preference Narrative is to employ the Devil’s Advocate technique whenever we’re faced with a significant decision or when the correct decision seems “obvious”. This would entail actively trying to develop the strongest counter-argument to our preferred position on a topic. Doing so would force us to at least try to interpret the facts of a situation from a different world view.

Another strategy is to try to create an alternative metaphor or analogy for a situation. Because System 1 thinking works through metaphor and analogy, consciously searching for an alternative metaphor or analogy may force you to re-interpret the facts of a situation from a different worldview, which can only be done by activating System 2 thinking.

Journal Post for class on February 4, 2019

1. One example from *The Fires* of an attempt to apply the RAM model.

One example from The Fires of an attempt to apply the RAM model was Henry Rowan’s efforts to transfer the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS) used by the Pentagon to social welfare agencies (Flood, 2010, p. 97). Rowan’s plan was to use the “RAND Method” to understand social problems, such as poverty, crime, urban planning, education, and healthcare, and develop policy solutions based on rational analysis of the problems (Flood, 2010, p. 98).

1. A paragraph describing your analysis of where the policy changes sought by John O’Hagan and John Lindsay would fall on Lowi’s policy typology. Where does your policy fall on the typology?

The policy changes sought by John O’Hagan and John Lindsay appear to be primarily regulatory policy on Lowi’s policy typology. O’Hagan implementation of standard operating procedures for how firefighters handled certain types of fires and Lindsay’s plans for reforming the bureaucracy and address the problem of crime were aimed at maintaining order and stopping behaviors that were detrimental to society. However, there are elements of distributive and redistributive policy in the changes sought by O’Hagan and Lindsay. Decisions about where to locate fire houses were essentially decisions about providing benefits to various segments of the city. Actions regarding welfare programs seemed to be focused on achieving economic equality.

Public Law 97-219 (Small Business Innovation Act of 1982), which created the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program and subsequent reauthorizations and attempts to modify the law seem to fall primarily within redistributive policy. The policy is primarily an attempt to provide a level playing field for small businesses to participate in government research and development (R&D) by setting aside minimum percentages of the R&D budgets of agencies for small businesses. However, the aspects of the law aimed at promoting the transfer of technology derived from federally-funded research to the private sector seem to be more distributive in nature.

1. Five bullet points describing an example from the NYFD of:
   1. a BHAG (big, hairy, audacious goal): President Johnson’s Great Society and War on Poverty initiates are examples of BHAGs (big, hairy, audacious goals) at the federal level while John Lindsay’s efforts to reform the bureaucracy of New York, City and welfare programs are examples at the local government level.
   2. Incrementalism: An example of incrementalism is the Tammany approach to problem-solving which essentially maintained the status quo until a problem arose at which point the government would fix the problem while disrupting the system as little as possible.
   3. Policy in intention: An example of policy in intention is John Lindsay focus on crime prevention.
   4. Policy in implementation: An example of policy in implementation is the establishment of testing for civil service jobs and promotions.
   5. Policy in experience: An example of policy in experience is how the problems reported by citizens were handled and resolved under the Tammany approach

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**Three bullet points that give examples of administrative evil from the Fires**

Three examples of administrative evil from *The Fires* include:

* The slum clearance policy, which was intended to eliminate squalor and poor living conditions but resulted in the destruction of industrial jobs and a domestic refugee crisis.
* The implementation of Residential Security Maps by the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC), which were intended to provide banks with better mortgage lending guidelines but resulted in discriminatory lending practices.
* John O’Hagan’s acquiescence to requests to reduce the fire department budget in spite of knowing that it had already been reduced to dangerously low levels, which resulted in worse fire response and increased human fatalities.

**In a succinct paragraph, describe how you think RAND, a champion of System 2 thinking, became a System 1 organization causing them to proffer a plan to close busy fire houses.**

Despite being a champion of System 2 decision making, the RAND Corporation arguably became a System 1 decision making organization which led them to propose irrational strategies including a plan to close busy fire houses. I propose that subscribing to a single decision making theory for all decisions was the fundamental issue. Paradoxically, the adherence to rational choice theory as the only theory of decision making for evaluating policy alternatives in fact violates the premise of rational decision making which presumes a comprehensive consideration of all alternatives. In a strict sense, this would include the consideration of alternative or complementary decision making theories that might be better suited to the facts and circumstances at hand.

**Chapter 3 in The Public Policy Primer again draws our attention to decision making – provide two sentences, one describing the ethical framework you think undergirds or flows from public choice theory and models like Tiebout and one describing the ethical framework informing cooperative, face to face problem solving.**

I believe that public choice theory and the Tiebout model are based on a utilitarian ethic because they posit that the objective is to produce the greatest amount of good for the greatest amount of people through a market environment. I believe a dialogic ethic informs cooperative, face-to-face problem solving, which requires discussion and an exchange of information and ideas to solve complex problems.