Discussion Board Post for class 02 on January 28, 2019

1. **Considering Stone’s discussion, which of the two dominant paradigms (Market v. Polis or RAM v. Politics or System 1 v. System 2 thinking – where the first item in the pair represents the dominance of rational thought and the second the dominance of reflexive, subconscious, non-fact driven thought) best captures the policy process as it applies to your policy domain and specific policy. Why? (2 short paragraphs)**

I believe the Rational Actor Model (RAM) v. Politics paradigm best captures the policy process as it applies to the policy domain of technology transfer policy and the specific policy of providing funding for Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) projects. Public Law 97-219 (Small Business Innovation Act of 1982) created the SBIR program. The legislation was the result of the passage of H.R.4326 (Small Business Innovation Development Act of 1982) by the House of Representatives and S.881 (Small Business Innovation Development Act of 1982) by the Senate during the 97th Congress (1981-1982). One of its four stated objectives (which is of particular interest to me) is to increase the transfer of innovations derived from Federal research and development (R&D) to the private sector. The program was most recently reauthorized through FY2017 by the Public Law 112-81 (2012 Defense Authorization Act). There have been several attempts to amend the law, the most recent being H.R.447 (SBIR Enhancement Act of 2011) introduced in the House during the 112th Congress (2011-2012).

The debate about this specific policy seems to be driven by interpretations of the data, facts, and information presented by various interested parties and logical consideration of what might produce the desired policy outcomes. The issue itself doesn’t seem to impact most people in a direct personal way or be of a nature of which many policymakers can personally identify. It also doesn’t evoke strong emotional responses. Moreover, there does not seem to be any overriding metaphor or analogy that is being used to frame the debate, which would be indicative of System 1 thinking.

1. **In two or three succinct sentences, comment on two of your colleagues’ discussion board entries that you find intriguing, disagree with, or can expand upon.**

Response to Erica Sanders’ post regarding mental illness:

Erica, mental health policy is a very broad topic so I’m going to reply to your post in terms of a personal example of a very specific mental illness issue. Mental illness actually runs in my family, particularly on my mother’s side. I had one maternal uncle that suffered from Schizophrenia and another maternal uncle that suffered from severe depression that led to alcoholism. My mother, who passed away a year ago, suffered from mental illness that was never clearly diagnosed. Eventually her doctors settled on major depression with psychotic features but that was only a guess. I had to work with a state agency to petition to have her placed under state guardianship on two separate occasions. One of the biggest frustrations dealing with my mother’s situation was the government policies and laws regarding when a person can be forced into treatment against their will. This seems like one of those paradoxes that Stone discusses. Current policy seems biased towards our societal value of “personal freedom” but in following this policy we seem to be violating our societal value of “helping the helpless”. There may also be some System 1 v. System 2 Thinking going on in the debate. There are those who characterize mental illness as being “weak minded and weak willed” and others who characterize it in terms of disease and genetics. Moreover, there is the stigma many still associate with mental illness that causes many who suffer from it, and sometimes their family members as well, to pursue seemingly irrational actions (or inactions).

Response to Joseph Fetter’s post about The Market v. Polis Paradigm in Affordable Housing:

In her book Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making, Stone argues that a struggle between equally plausible but conflicting ideas underlies every policy issue. With regard to affordable housing, the conflict might be over the idea that everyone should be able to live in decent housing of minimum quality versus our societal commitment to capitalism and aversion to anything that “feels” like socialism.

Discussion Board Post for class 03 on February 4, 2019

1. **A paragraph describing the Morality Tales various stakeholders appeal to in advancing their case for or against Fire Department reforms. What is (are) the Morality tale(s) informing your policy?**

In reading The Fires, to me it didn’t appear that the stakeholders were making strong appeals to any particular morality tale in advancing their case regarding fire department reforms. Lindsay’s framing of policy issues in general seemed to appeal to the Rot at the Top morality tale. In his bid to reform the bureaucracy, Lindsay essentially argues that the government is the problem because it is insensitive to its failings, arrogant in its power, and contemptuous of challenge. One might argue that O’Hagan’s efforts to institute policy reforms in the fire department tepidly appealed to the Benevolent Community morality tale in an effort to save lives.

With regard to the policy domain of technology transfer policy and the specific policy of setting aside funding for small businesses to participate in federal research and development (R&D) projects through the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program, there are hints that some stakeholders are appealing to the Rot at the Top morality tale. Advocates of the program seem to frame the issue as the system being subverted in such a way that small business don’t get a fair chance to compete for government contracts and that the playing field is somehow titled to the advantage of large businesses. Opponents seem to be appealing to the Triumphant Individual morality tale by framing the issue as any business being able to successfully compete for government contracts without set-asides and special considerations if they’re worthy.

1. **In two or three succinct sentences, comment on two of your colleagues’ discussion board entries that you find intriguing, disagree with, or can expand upon.**

Comments on post by Tiffany Rosenweig regarding morality tales in education policy:

Does the framing of the issues and the particular morality tales to which stakeholders appeal varying depending on whether the focus is K-12 or post-secondary education or by various segments of the community? To me it seems that some advocates of comprehensive reform of education policy, particularly in the African-American community, are also appealing to a Rot at the Top morality tale. At times it seems that they are arguing that indifference or subversion of the system is preventing the playing field from being leveled and impeding the implementation of changes that would benefit particular segments of society (e.g., the urban poor which is sometimes a euphemism for “poor Blacks”).

Comments on post by Erica Sanders regarding morality tales in mental health policy:

It sounds like opponents of providing mental health assistance and resources to various segments of the community are appealing to the Benevolent Community morality tale. It seems that they are essentially saying that we should only expend resources for treating mental illness on those who are deserving but alcoholics and drug addicts not deserving.

Discussion Board Post for class 04 on February 11, 2019

**Examples of administrative evil that may lurk in your policy area/policy focus**

Examples of administrative evil that may be present in the technology transfer policy domain and the specific policy of setting aside funding for small businesses to participate in federal research and development (R&D) projects through the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program include the following:

* The policy of considering an applicant’s previous number of SBIR program awards or applications when deciding whether or not to grant an award for a new SBIR application is apparently intended to promote access to the program but may actually be resulting in the federal government missing opportunities to benefit from useful, valuable technological solutions.
* Application and selection procedures for awarding SBIR grants intended to ensure fairness in the grant award process may actually be contributing to the lack of participation from various racial and ethnic groups.

**In two or three succinct sentences, comment on two of your colleagues’ discussion board entries that you find intriguing, disagree with, or can expand upon.**

Comments on post about administrative evil in prisoner reentry by Marilyn Richardson:

As a whole, it seems as though the criminal justice system that is intended to make society safer is actually making society less safe by pushing previous offenders back into criminal behavior to survive. ﻿﻿﻿Moreover, some policies such as revoking voting privileges for previous offenders may be intended to make society safer by creating a deterrent to criminal behavior are resulting in a more dysfunctional democracy overall and alienating large segments of society.

Comments on post about administrative evil in mental health care by Erica Sanders:

Another possible example of administrative evil in mental health policy are laws intended to protect the freedom, self-agency, and privacy of individuals may be exacerbating mental health problems by preventing individuals from getting the care they need. Also, policies intended to provide health insurance to those below the poverty level so they can obtain care, including mental health care, are actually resulting in those same individuals not being able to obtain any kind of care at all.

Discussion Board Post for class 05 on February 18, 2019

**Briefly describe the competing policy narratives that attempt to frame the policy debate in your area and suggest one reason why one narrative seems more compelling than the other/or are they equally compelling?**

In the debate regarding the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program in the technology transfer policy domain, the primary policy narrative used by proponents to frame the debate seems to be centered on the idea of the resourceful and innovative small business on whom the Nation is highly dependent for continued global competitiveness but who doesn’t get a fair chance to compete for federal research and development funding because the system inherently favors large businesses. Self-interested contract officers with a given amount of federal dollars to distribute and monitor reduce their workloads by awarding a small number of large awards that can only be handled by large businesses rather than a large number of smaller awards to small businesses.

From what I can ascertain so far, the primary policy narrative of skeptics of the program to frame the debate is based on the idea that it’s unfair to have one set of rules for one group and another set of rules for another group. Moreover, taking away research and development dollars from large businesses and research institutions to provide funding to small businesses is simply unjust and Un-American.

One reason the policy narrative of proponents of the programs may seem more compelling is because it aligns with popular beliefs about small businesses being more resourceful, efficient, and innovative than large businesses and general feelings that large businesses mistreat their employees and are undeserving of any inherent bias in the system that favors them over small businesses.

**In two or three succinct sentences, comment on two of your colleagues’ discussion board entries that you find intriguing, disagree with, or can expand upon.**

Response to post by Bernard Kindall about policy narratives in the health care domain:

It seems that proponents of the ACA mandate frame the debate with a policy narrative that focuses on average, hard-working citizens not fortunate enough to be able to obtain health insurance through an employer or in the free-market because “greedy” insurance companies have corrupted the market by pursuing efficiency using competitive strategies that favor large groups of individuals and deny individuals with pre-existing conditions. They seem to define equity in terms of equal statistical chances but unequal slices. Opponents of the ACA mandate seem to frame the debate with a policy narrative that focuses on the birthright of the American citizen to choose whether or not they want health insurance. They seem to define equity as equal starting resources in a fair competition. Debate seems to be focused on the method of distribution.

Response to post by James Tillis about policy narratives in the debate about urban agriculture zones:

What are the benefits that urban agricultural zones (UAZs) receive compared to non-UAZs and do those benefits come at the expense of some identified group? Moreover, how are UAZs defined (i.e., how is membership determined)?

Discussion Board Post for class 06 on February 25, 2019

**The Frameworks Institute works in a wide variety of policy domains. Write a brief paragraph focused on the following questions. Does the article suggest language strategies for framing your policy issue in a way that more effectively achieves the goals you espouse? If your specific policy domain is not mentioned, based on the examples in the article are there term that might be more effective in articulating policy goals? How are those who are opposed to the policy outcomes you desire framing the issue?**

The article about the Frameworks Institute did not specifically discuss the technology transfer policy domain and therefore it did not specifically suggest language strategies for framing the policy issues at the center of the debate regarding the Small Business Innovation Act of 1982. Based on the examples in the article, there were no terms that readily come to mind that might have been more effective in articulating policy goals in the debate about this legislation, particularly for opponents of the legislation. The approach used by Frameworks Institute is designed to translate complicated concepts by creating messages that are scientifically accurate and easy to understand by both policymakers and the public. The debate about the Small Business Innovation Act of 1982 did not include any scientifically complex concepts. However, opponents of the policy may have used the Frameworks Institute approach to help policymakers and the public better understand the negative implications associated with distributive and redistributive policy and the concept of negative liberty, which is how they framed the issue. They may have also used the approach to help policymakers and the public understand that innovations vary in their complexity so the argument that small businesses are more efficient innovators than large businesses is not completely accurate.  Proponents of the policy may have used the Framework Institute approach to strengthen their already strong position in the debate by helping policymakers and the public better understand the link between technological innovation, economic prosperity, and global competitiveness.

**In two or three succinct sentences, comment on two of your colleagues’ discussion board entries that you find intriguing, disagree with, or can expand upon.**

Response to discussion board post about framing the debate about election administration and voting by Daniel Ferris:

Another way to view the issue is in terms of positive liberty and providing the support necessary for those citizens who want to exercise their voting rights (or privileges) to do so. It might be possible to use the Frameworks Institute approach help policymakers and the public better understand causal linkages between various election administration approaches (such as same-day registration and an election day holiday), increased voter participation, equity in our election system.

Response to discussion board post about framing the debate about the Affordable Care Act by Bernard Kindell:

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) seems to essentially address the topic of healthcare in terms of a positive liberty and providing the support and resources necessary for citizens to fulfill their healthcare needs. Proponents of the legislation may have used the Frameworks Institute approach to help policymakers and the public better understand the concept of positive liberty in the context of access to healthcare. They may have also been better able to incorporate in the debate the issue of insecurity about being able the get medical assistance when needed without the prospect of financial ruin by creating a term or phrase (e.g., “healthcare access anxiety”) to help policymakers and the public understand the negative ramifications from worrying about such matters, similar to the “toxic stress” term that Frameworks Institute created to describe the brain damage that childhood abuse and neglect causes.

Discussion Board Post for class 07 on March 4, 2019

**Your three to five slide power point presentations displaying your domain map, a description of the key players and the different policy consequences flowing from the competing frames.**

Attached is a PDF of my PowerPoint slides for my issue framing paper about Pub.L. 97-219 The Small Business Innovation Act of 1982.

**In a brief paragraph, comment on two of your colleagues’ power point presentation, noting any further questions or themes needing further elaboration.**

Comments about discussion board post about issue framing in the debate about expanding Medicaid in Missouri posted by Justin Lorenz:

A few questions to consider:

* Is the Missouri General Assembly (House and Senate) trying to convince Gov. Parsons to support Medicaid expansion or maintain his opposition to it?
* Are liberal taxpayers involved in the debate?
* Is there a group of working-class people who lack would qualify for Medicaid under an expansion that would serve as messengers to whom conservative taxpayers would be sympathetic e.g., poor farmers, self-employed individuals, young teachers, etc.)?

Comments about discussion board post about issue framing in the debate about involuntary committal posted by Erica Sanders:

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A few questions and comments:

* I don't quite understand who the "Police Powers" stakeholders are.
* Does "anti-voluntary commitment" mean they are pro-involuntary commitment and believe that there should not be an option for people to voluntarily commitment themselves?
* Is this state level policy?  Who are the policymakers?

Discussion Board Post for class 08 on March 18, 2019

**Analyze the narrative stories defining and contesting your policy issue by describing in two or three sentence bullet points:**

* **The type of story it is, using Stone’s story types**
* **The metaphors used to frame the issue**
* **Any use of synecdoche**
* **The way numbers are used**
* **The causal theories offered**
* **How the policy sorts interests and align costs and benefits**
* **The decision strategies of problem definition (rational analytical or polis)**

Analysis of the narrative stories defining and contesting Pub.L. 97-219 Small Business Innovation Act of 1982.

* Story type: Proponents primarily used a story of decline arguing that America’s way of life and economic prosperity were more secure previously but the situation has deteriorated to a point where something must be done before a crisis occurs. Opponents didn’t seem to craft a well-defined narrative story. They seemed to allude to certain elements of the stymied progress story in which the proposed policy would interfere with talent researchers who happen to work at large institutions (i.e., the hero).
* Metaphors: So far I’ve found no evidence that either side used metaphors to frame the policy debate.
* Synecdoche: So far I’ve found no evidence that either side used synecdoche to frame the policy debate.
* Numbers: Proponents used numbers to imply the need for action by referring to estimates that small business participation in federal research and development has never exceed 4 percent despite the fact that most “significant” innovations have been produced by small businesses. Opponents of the policy attempted to use numbers to demonstrate how researchers at large institutions would be negatively affected by the policy.
* Causal theories: Proponents of the policy implied that part of the cause of the economic recession was the lack of participation in federal research and development by small businesses. They attributed the cause of this lack of participation to bureaucratic processes that drove agency contract administrators to discriminate against small businesses and favor large businesses. Opponents didn’t seem to put forward any type of causal theory.
* Interests: The policy created two primary interest groups – small for-profit businesses and large research organizations. The policy design created concentrated benefits for the small for-profit business interest and diffused costs for the large research organization interest.
* Decision strategies: The decision strategy used by policymakers considering this legislation was more consistent with the polis model. The policy goal was established as a minimum set-aside which was somewhat ambiguous and shifted responsibility for the final amount of the set-aside to the various agencies. They did not make a comprehensive review of alternatives and focused only on whether or not to establish a set-aside, which is essentially a Hobson’s choice proposition. The consequences of the policy were very much subjective and dependent on the framing used by the various sides in the debate.

**In a short paragraph or two comment on your partners’ story analysis – what would you like to see further elucidated?**

Comments on discussion board post by Bernard Kendall about the Affordable Care Act narrative stories:

Given the way the ACA debate turned out, I was wondering if the policy actually fell into either the concentrated costs-concentrated benefits quadrant of James Q. Wilson’s model of policy contests. The ACA seems to have resulted in a stalemate or might develop into alternating victories for the two sides in the policy debate. To me, it appeared that the costs of the policy would be born primarily by those who were previously uninsured but now had to purchase health insurance. The benefits of the policy seem to be concentrated to health insurance providers who would have obtained more customers.

Comments on discussion board post by Erica Sanders about involuntary committal narrative stories:

I was particularly interested in your observation that the term “mental illness” is itself a metaphor. I had to really stop and think about it. I believe that you’re absolutely correct. People tend to use the term “illness” to refer to something like the common cold that most people consider to be a nuisance but not necessarily serious. They use the term “disease” for things that are considered serious and life-threatening such as breast cancer. Perhaps the issue could gain more prominence on the policy agenda if the various stakeholders began using terms and phrases such as “mental disease” or “neurological diseases that affect mental processes” to frame the debate. The approach of the Frameworks Institute would probably be very useful.

Discussion Board Post for class 09 on March 25, 2019

**Using the policy you are working with as a test case, briefly critique each of the models below noting how the model does or does not apply to the action of key players in the process:**

* **Advocacy coalitions**
* **Punctuated Equilibrium**
* **Muddling Through**
* **Multiple Streams and Windows**

**Your critique should take the form of four short paragraphs.**

Public Law 97-219 The Small Business Innovation Act of 1982 (Pub.L. 97-219) established a minimum set-aside that required federal agencies to direct a certain portion of their research and development (R&D) budgets to award funding for R&D projects to small businesses. The details of the policy contest regarding Pub.L. 97-219 conform to the major models of policy change to varying degrees. With regard to the advocacy coalition framework (ACF), the legislation focused on secondary beliefs related to how R&D funding was distributed. There was a coalition of those that supported the legislation, which comprised members of Congress (both House and Senate), agency representatives, and interest group leaders. The coalition of those that opposed the legislation was comprised mostly of select interest group leaders. Both of these coalitions were competing to influence the policymaking subsystem. However, ACF seems to imply that policy change occurs over a long period of time (e.g., 10 years or more) but the policy change that resulted in Pub.L. 97-219 took place over a relatively shorter period of time.

The policy debate around Pub.L. 97-219 fits punctuated equilibrium theory (PET) to some degree. Policy for how R&D funding was distributed was relatively unchanged for a fairly long period of time. The economic recession and indicators suggesting the nation’s technological advantage was eroding served as critical events that made the general sentiment favorable for the proposed policy change.

The concept of muddling through as a process for policy change can also be applied to Pub.L. 97-219. There seemed to be little, if any, analysis of the policy for distributing R&D funding and how the proposed legislation would actually produce the desired policy outcomes. It doesn’t appear that any real theories were applied in formulating the policy. Moreover, there was no real consideration of other alternatives for addressing the problems the policy was supposed to mitigate.

The process by which Pub.L. 97-219 came to be seems to conform to the multiple streams (i.e., policy windows) model as well. The problem stream comprised the economic recession of the late 1970s and early 1980s and indicators that suggested the nation was losing its technological advantage. The policy stream comprised the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program that the National Science Foundation (NSF) was piloting. This program was championed by NSF Program Manager Roland Tibbetts who believed that small businesses should be participating more in federal R&D projects. The political stream consisted of the general national mood that something needed to be done to address the economic problems. However, the multiple streams model seems to imply that a policy window opens up when the three streams align out of happenstance. I argue that what actually happens is that advocates for policy change present an argument that links the streams in a cohesive way that a majority of stakeholders finds plausible and useful for serving their own ends, which is what seems to have occurred with Pub.L. 97-219.

**Describe one key organization in your policy subsystem. In your judgement has it contributed to or hindered activities in the current macro political system?**

One key organization in the policy subsystem for small business participation in federal funding for R&D projects was and continues to be the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB). To me it seems that the NFIB has contributed to activities in the macro political system in the sense that it actively seeks to advance issues relevant to its constituency on to the political agenda. To do so, the NFIB attempts to influence members of Congress, the Office of the President, and the decisions of the court system.

**Briefly contrast the role played by the policy subsystem in two of your colleagues’ specific policy area with how it functions in your policy domain. For example is the subsystem working to advance or slow down the implementation of the policy?**

Comments on discussion post by Joe Fetter:

The policy subsystem for Tax Increment Financing (TIF) reform operates at the state and local level while the policy subsystem for small business participation in federal funding for R&D projects operates at the federal level. Whereas the policy subsystem for TIF reform is not actively working to advance implementation of policy change (i.e., thwarting efforts for policy change), the policy subsystem for small business participation in federal funding for R&D projects was advancing policy change in the early 1980s but currently seems to be in more of a maintenance mode.

Comments on discussion post by Daniel Ferris:

The policy subsystem for voter identification (Voter ID) reform operates at the federal and state level while the policy subsystem for small business participation in federal funding for R&D projects operates only at the federal level. It seems that the policy subsystem for Voter ID is currently working to restrict individual liberties under the guise of increasing security. The policy subsystem for small business participation in federal funding for R&D projects is focused on increasing equity.

Discussion Board Post for class on April 1, 2019

**A short reflection (a paragraph or two) on the meaning of the phrase, “experts should be on tap, not on top” and discuss the appropriate role of “facts” in the current policy climate.**

I interpret the phrase “experts should be on tap, not on top” to mean that experts with specialized knowledge in a given policy area should not lead policymaking in those areas but should instead play a subordinate supporting role in the policymaking process. I believe the philosophy encapsulated by this phrase is in keeping with the general consensus regarding democratic values of the United States. However, this can be quite challenging to do in practice because superior knowledge in a given domain conveys a form of practical power that enables the expert to step into the leadership role. If you accept the argument conveyed by this phrase, then the key question becomes one of how do policymakers keep experts “on tap”? I believe that elected officials stand a better chance of living up to the value espoused by this saying if they counterbalance the information they receive from one group of experts by actively seeking out information from other experts in the field that supports alternative positions. However, this assumes that elected officials are rational decision makers not subject to selecting and manipulating the information from experts to advance their own preferred policy position, which I believe is highly unlikely in the current policy climate where the facts of policy problems are often in dispute just as much as the policy alternatives.

**After reviewing the work of your colleagues, briefly note whether you agree or disagree with two colleagues’ analysis of the proper role of experts and the role of facts in the current policy climate. Why or why not?**

Comments on post by Benard Kindall:

I agree that experts may allow their own biases to shade their opinions and recommendations, whether intentionally or unintentionally. But I don’t believe that in itself creates an unsurmountable obstacle to realizing the ideal conveyed by the phrase “experts should be on tap, not on top.” Our elected officials could very well employ methods and techniques to mitigate this problem with experts. However, our elected officials, being humans themselves, are not fully rational decision makers and are subject to selecting and manipulating information from experts to suit their own goals.

Comments on post by Denise Blackman:

Previously, I would have agreed with the idea that there are objective facts that can be proven truthful. However, based on what I’ve been exposed to in this class and other courses, I find myself leaning more and more towards the position that objective facts are the exception and not the rule. For example, even in the example you provide about the objective facts surrounding the Affordable Care Act (ACA) I see issues. There are debatable aspects to these so called objective facts such as how we define being “covered” by health insurance, how we define “reasonable” rates, and what constitutes “better” health care and coverage for those with mental health concerns.