**Policy Process Final Oral Exam Questions: Spring 2019**

1. **A key stage in the policy process is gaining the attention of policy makers. Out of the hundreds or thousands of issues that they could focus on, only a relative few actually make it to the agenda. Explain the different agenda levels and how an issue can move through those levels or can be prevented from moving. In your own research, was there an illustration or example of agenda setting?**

There are three basic agenda levels. The systemic agenda consists of any policy action that could possibly be considered by participants in the policy process. The institutional agenda consists of possible policy actions being considered by a governmental body. The decision agenda consists of proposed policy actions that a governmental body is about to act upon.

An issue can move through the agenda levels in various ways depending on who controls the agenda in a given policy domain. At one extreme the agenda may be control by an elitist triumvirate (i.e., the iron triangle model). At the other extreme of the spectrum the agenda may be controlled by a policy subsystem. One model of agenda setting may better fit a given situation than the other, which will determine which strategies will tend to work better for moving an issue through the different agenda levels.

If the elitist model is more relevant and elites are preventing an issue from reaching the decision agenda, then one might be successful in advancing the issue through the agenda levels by appealing to the public, appealing to a higher level of decision making (such as the state or federal courts), or changing the venue by appealing to the federal government rather than the state government or vice versa.

If the policy subsystem model is more appropriate to a given situation, then one might advance an issue through the agenda levels by employing approaches suggested by the multiple streams and policy windows theory and the advocacy coalition framework (ACF). These would include framing the issue in such a way as to link it with a problem that is on the decision agenda, building coalitions with prominent and hidden policy actors, and modifying the policy argument to align with the politics of the situation. External shocks or punctuations that shift the point of stability in a policy domain present unique opportunities for rapid policy change.

In the technology transfer policy domain, the passage of the Small Business Innovation Act of 1982 (Pub.L. 97-219) seems to exemplify the effectiveness of approaches based on the multiple streams and policy windows theories for getting an issue to the decision agenda. The issue of economic stagnation and maintaining the nation’s global competitiveness were already on the institutional and decision agendas. Proponents of the policy effectively link it to this problem and built a coalition of prominent policy actors to support the policy.

1. **A question that has been a constant throughout this term has been, “Who’s in Charge?” The answer has taken two forms – an elite few are in charge or nobody’s in charge. Explain these two concepts and be prepared to discuss which model most closely parallels what you found in your research.**

There are two basic models of describing who is in charge of policy change. One model, what Deborah Stone calls the rationality project, is based on rational evaluation of alternatives guided by self-interest, which optimizes social welfare through the invisible hand of the market. Change is transactional in nature. At the other end of the spectrum is the Deborah Stone’s polis model, which is based on collective goals and collective efforts of a community and is often more emotional than rational. Change is driven by mutual agreement on ideas. The rationality model operates under the premise that there is an optimal solution to any given policy problem. The polis model operates under the premise that there are competing but equally plausible conceptions of any given policy problem (i.e., a policy paradox) that the community must resolve to effect policy change.

In studying the policy process that resulted in the Small Business Innovation Act of 1982 (Pub.L. 97-219), I found evidence that was indicative of Stone’s polis model. The primary policy paradox was around the concept of equity. Proponents of the policy defined equity in terms of the ability of small business to participate in federally-funded research and development (R&D) while opponents of the policy defined equity in terms of every applicant being evaluated by the same rules and having an equal opportunity to compete for R&D funding.

1. **Of the various change models we discussed this semester, iron triangles, advocacy coalitions, punctuated equilibrium, and streams and windows, what seemed most applicable to explaining your own research topic?**

The multiple streams and policy windows model seemed most applicable in explaining policy change as related to the passage of the Small Business Innovation Act of 1982 (Pub.L. 97-219). The issue of economic stagnation and maintaining the nation’s global competitiveness were already on the institutional and decision agendas. Proponents of the policy effectively link it to this problem and built a coalition of prominent policy actors to support the policy and advance the policy while the policy window was open and the political environment was favorable.

1. **The policy process can be conceived of as having two levels – a macro political level and a subsystem level. Chief executives (Presidents, mayors, etc.) and legislative bodies (Congress, state legislators, and city councils) are macro political institutions, while agencies that carry out the day to day work of government constitute the subsystem. In your research did you encounter issue movement between the two systems? What effect did the consignment of your policy to one level or another have on the support and/or progress of your initiative?**

With regard to the Small Business Innovation Act of 1982 (Pub.L. 97-219), the issue seemed to move from the policy subsystem to the macro political level. The policy was conceived and developed in the policy subsystem by a program officer within the National Science Foundation (NSF). In a relatively short time it moved to the Congress where it received overwhelming support.

1. **Deborah Stone articulated five goals for the policy/politics process: equity, efficiency, welfare, liberty, and security. Of these goals, which seemed the most prominent in your research? Did you encounter tradeoffs among the goals that supported the market model, or were the tradeoffs negligible or nonexistent, supporting a polis model?**

Of the five policy process goals that Deborah Stone articulated, three seemed to be most prominent in the debate over the Small Business Innovation Act of 1982 (Pub.L. 97-219). These were equity, welfare, and security. Tradeoffs among the goals seemed to be nonexistent, which suggests a polis model of policy of decision making. The issue of equity was framed in terms of giving small businesses a fair chance at participating in federally-funded research and development (R&D). This issue of welfare was framed in the context of the economic challenges of the early 1980s and the general perception that small businesses generate the majority of new jobs in the economy. The issue of security was framed as the U.S. losing is technological advantage over other countries and the belief that small businesses are more innovative than big businesses. The policy was framed as a way of advancing all three policy goals.

1. **Stone also describes five ways to strategically represent issues so they gain the attention of policy makers and the support needed to move the issue forward. These are symbols, numbers, causes, interests, and decisions. What seemed most prominent among these in the framing of your policy issue? How were they used? To what end?**

In the framing of the Small Business Innovation Act of 1982 (Pub.L. 97-219), symbols and interests seemed most prominent. The primary symbol that proponents used was the idea of small businesses being more innovative and efficient than big businesses. Those who would benefit from increased participation in federally-funded research and development by small businesses coalesced around the policy. These included small businesses and small business advocacy groups. In the end, the policy received overwhelming support.

1. **Stone suggests five ways to solve problems in the polis: incentives, rules, facts, rights, and powers. Did your research uncover a dominant problem solving motif? Did the problem solving motif mirror the market or the polis definition of the strategy?**

Of the five ways to solve problems in the polis that Stone articulates, rules seemed to be the dominant problem solving motif in the debate about the Small Business Innovation Act of 1982 (Pub.L. 97-219).

QUESTION: How does the market definition of rules differ from the polis definition?

1. **Considering the various policy typologies (distributive, redistributive, regulatory; adaptive, control; areal, segmental; public goods, private goods; symbolic, tangible), what category would you place your policy into or, following Steinberger, was the policy type contested, i.e. it moved among categories depending upon who was doing the classifying?**

The Small Business Innovation Act of 1982 (Pub.L. 97-219) seemed to have elements of redistributive and regulatory policy.

1. **Did your research find any examples of collaborative networks as described by Booher and Innes? Did the network meet the DIAD criteria for exerting maximum network power?**

QUESTION: How did Booher and Innes describe collaborative networks?

QUESTION: What is the DIAD criteria for exerting maximum force?

1. **Throughout the term, two major frames for considering the policy process have been compared and contrasted. These are the market, RAM model and the polis model. Based upon your readings and your own research, what is your sense about the dominance of one model over the other? Are there conditions under which one model seems to take precedence over the other? Or do the models themselves become rhetorical devices to advance a particular agenda? Are there any concrete examples of your conclusion from your own research?**

Based on my own reading of the course material and my study of the Small Business Innovation Act of 1982 (Pub.L. 97-219), I believe that the Polis model seems to dominate the Market model. {EXPLAIN WHY.}

1. **Making a decision involves ethical considerations. Discuss the different frameworks for making ethical decisions. What does it mean to say ethics is relational?**

There are three basic frameworks for making ethical decisions. Utilitarian ethics focuses on doing the most good for the most number of people. Deontological ethics focuses on doing what’s right. Dialogic ethics focuses on honest and transparent communications among individuals with differing perspectives to come to an agreement upon what is the appropriate decision in a given situation. The saying that “ethics is relational” means that ethics is a search for what is just and fair in human interaction.

1. **There is an increasingly blurry line between public and private decision making and public and private goods. Describe the framework discussed in class for analyzing public and private functions. In your research did you uncover examples of public/private tensions, cooperation, challenges?**

The framework for analyzing public and private functions discussed in class was based on understanding the two functions of government, which are (1) deciding to provide a service and (2) providing the service. It is possible for the government to outsource either or both functions to the private sector. There are legitimate reasons for governments to privatize certain functions such as acquiring skills and capabilities or avoiding direct competition with the private sector. However, privatization can be overused or create issues regarding substantive rights.

1. **During the semester we discussed the different levels of policy, policy-in-intention, policy-in- implementation, and policy-in-experience. Smith and Larimer discuss the difficulties of implementation studies. Comment on their discussion noting the different challenges each generation of policy implementation studies attempted to manage.**
2. **The narrative policy framework recognizes the importance of stories for how we organize the world and the impact such stories have on policy. However, this framework has two iterations, the dominant post structural approach and the more traditional, scientific – structuralist approach. Discuss the difference between the two (unit of analysis, methodology, etc.) and the possibility of a “marriage” of the two approaches. Did you find any relevance of the npf in your own research?**

QUESTION: What is the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF)?

1. **There are two approaches to answering the question “What should we do?”: reflective deliberation and discourse among those with various perspectives and causal theories seeking to maximize utility. The Pareto and Kaldo-Hicks concepts of efficiency clearly fit into the latter category. Define these concepts and discuss from the point of view of your own research their relative merits and weaknesses compared to the more qualitative reflective approach.**
2. **Smith and Larimer’s discussion of prospect theory brings us full circle. They argue for the inclusion of findings from brain science and psychology into the study of public policy. Explain the evolutionary/neurological dynamics behind the terms “preference falsification,” “emotional rationality,” “wary cooperators,” and “risk loss aversion” and possible connections to public policy.**