

Reflective Case Study Analysis

PAD 680 has been a valuable class in my education. In this class I have learned to expand my thinking when examining policy issues, whether they are governmental, business, or other types of policies. I have learned new ways to view policy that provide insight as to the motivations of the actors and models through which I can find reasons why a situation could unfold a certain way. I have also learned to examine other factors that I may have overlooked before taking this course. The following paragraphs will provide further detail as to the areas in which I have learned.

This class showed me that there are many ways in which one can define equity, each of which can lead to different solution. Previous to this class, I may have seen different ways of dividing something up that may be equitable, but the lessons on ways to examine equity were very enlightening in terms of classifying different types of equity. As a result of these lessons, I now have a framework that I can use to classify what others perceive as equity when deciding how to divide something. These lessons also taught me that another person's choice of equitable distribution it is not necessarily wrong simply because it differs from mine.

I also learned that examining an issue using the different models of public policy can reveal different perspectives on the problem and how to resolve it. By approaching a policy or situation using the nine models a different perspective can be gained. The models can be used to find meaning in a situation when examining the gestalt reveals little. Using the cases in this class, I have practiced applying the models as a way to dissect a situation to see how they can help me find meaning in a fact pattern.

The lessons on implementation have shown me that how a policy is implemented can differ greatly from its original intent. I have learned that few policies involve only a single agency and that the interpretation and the implementation of a policy will inevitably vary among the actors involved. Additionally I have learned that measuring

the impact of a policy and the performance of participating agencies can be a daunting, if not impossible, task. I especially found the Sacramento County drug case illuminating as it showed me some of the complexities and challenges of implementing a policy.

Throughout the course, I felt that a lesson being driven home was to never underestimate the impact of interest groups, current events or other environmental factors when examining how or why something got onto the agenda. As I have learned, policy doesn't happen in a vacuum or purely through rational and academic reasoning. The levels of power, the level of motivation and organization of stakeholders, the image of the target group and the events of the day can have as significant an affect on the agenda and policy creation as any well-spoken legislator. The Ruckelshaus case was a great example of how stakeholder analysis can be critical in creating a program, gaining support, managing a program and leveraging the players involved to get where you want to go.

As an example of how this class has affected my thinking I cite as an example my thoughts about a Supreme Court Case involving welfare reform in California. When writing a paper for another class I couldn't refrain from analyzing the case even though I couldn't include it in that paper. *Saenz v. Roe* was a Supreme Court case which reviewed the constitutionality of a California law that provided differing welfare benefit levels based on one's length of residency. The law restricted benefits for citizens of 12 or less months to the level provided by their previous state of residence. Given that California offers some of the highest welfare benefits of the states, the law was intended to reduce spending on welfare and was not intended to be discriminatory. An injunction was issued by a district court, but the law was later reinstated when Congress passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996. This act gave the states more power over welfare reform, including the residency requirement included in the California Law. The California law was examined again and

ruled unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court on the grounds that it violated various sections of the Constitution, most notably the Privileges and Immunities Clause. In this case, I saw that perspectives on what constituted equitable distribution were not the same among the various players. California focused on the process of distributing benefits and saw equity as new residents continuing to get the benefit levels from their own state. From the state's perspective, it was not depriving new residents of welfare benefits, it was merely holding constant the level of benefits those persons would have received in their home state, therefore equity was not a question. The petitioners in the case, as well as the Supreme Court, believed that the law created inequity as it effectively created a system in which there was rank-based distribution of benefits. From this perspective the petitioners were treated as lesser residents who were not receiving the full privileges and immunities of state residency, which was not permitted under the Privileges and Immunities Clause.

By applying the some of the models of public policy examined in class, one can see how California ended up in court. The systems model, which presumes policy is an output based on external forces on the system shows that lawmakers had to act. Pressure from taxpayers to lessen their burden and reduce welfare spending was sufficient to cause lawmakers to do something. Similarly, the public choice model illustrates the motivation for both California and the new residents to act as they did. By determining that the state was spending an unacceptable amount of its funds on welfare, California created the law as a way reduce spending. The new residents who would suffer from the law saw the negative impact it would have on their finances and filed suit simply to defend their own best interests.

The rational model, which leads lawmakers to finding a solution that maximizes gain for the dollar, led to the idea of reducing benefits to new residents as a way to maximize their "bang for the buck". Specifically, by reducing benefits to new residents,

the state could provide its current level of benefits to long-standing residents while simultaneously reducing costs. This solution is also in step with the incremental model as the change that became law was more of a “tweak” to the welfare program rather than a radical change that would have a sweeping impact. In its decision, the Court stated that a small, across the board reduction in benefits would have been acceptable. Instead, California chose to enact a reform that would impact the least number of people though the impact on that group would be considerably greater. California chose the smallest increment of change, which turned out to be unconstitutional.

The defense of California’s choice was rather Kant-ish reasoning. California argued that while it did not intend to discriminate, it felt it was protecting the state’s interest. It stated that it was protecting the benefits of real California residents by cutting benefits from those who may have moved to the state to take advantage of its higher benefit amounts. The state also said that the only way to test a person’s resolve to stay in the state was to see if they remained there for at least a year.

The existence and outcome of the case was based on the actions of groups. Simply put, representatives of the new resident group filed suit and found favor within the Supreme Court, which overruled California’s ability to enact policy despite the fact that such distinctions of residency have been approved before for things such as college tuition rates. In terms of opposition, the case made no mention of support for the law. Were it not for the actions of a group of people opposed to the California law, the law would have been allowed to continue. In other words, without a group willing to fight against this law, the status quo would have been its continued application.

Had I read this case before taking this class I would have found it exceedingly difficult to comprehend. While I would have been able to follow the events of the case I would not have gained a deeper understanding of why the parties involved acted as they

did. By applying the policy models and equity perspectives mentioned above I was able to gain insight into the case and better understand each party's motivations and actions.

While I have learned much throughout this course, there are certain lessons that have stood out to me as having the largest impact. Intellectually and cognitively, the models are tools with which I can examine policies, their environments and stakeholders. Due to their affect on my thinking, I believe the most important lessons were on equity and policy analysis models. They provide the foundation of understanding on which the remainder of the course was built. Without learning how to examine a situation, one does not have a clear picture with which to work. Reading the cases and applying the tools learned in class altered how I examine issue by teaching me to realize there really are multiple perspectives among any group of people involved and a number of different ways to examine the affects of a policy. Similarly, I thought the lesson discussing liberal idealism, realism and power transition was important as it added an additional facet, which is that one's perception when using the models is affected by their personal views on people and the use of power and leaders.

By interacting with others I realized how divergent people's analysis could be. I was able to see how my own biases affected my analysis by accentuating the importance of some aspects of the case or overlooking others. As a result of talking about the cases and lessons with others I found myself comparing how I viewed the cases and recent events using the tools acquired in class to my old approach to see how they differed. By examining my past analytic methods I found them to be based more on the environment and less on the structural issues. I found meaning in the case based on interesting pieces of data, rather than examining the whole situation from different vantage points. Frequently I glossed over central issues such as how a policy interpretation and implementation can affect its impact compared to its intent. I also found that I did not give as much credence to power and environmental influence over

policy formulation and agenda setting. My perspective was somewhat naïve as I tended to presume that other than normal partisan politics, policy was a product of rational thought only somewhat suspect to interest groups.

The lessons learned in PAD680 will affect how I approach my work in the future. Rather than rely on basic logic or a single, first impression of a situation or policy I will take the time to examine things from different perspectives to gain a more accurate assessment of a situation. I already view things that I see, hear or read differently by thinking about how equity could be creating from the different classifications and what the different models would suggest to be the best solution to the issue. Instead of making a reactionary assessment of what happened I am looking for underlying themes or causality. I am looking for what the motivators were, who was involved, who was mad, who was glad and how much so. As a future public administrator I will keep the models and other notes close at hand when looking at policies or when implementing them. If I have the opportunity to formulate policy in my career, I will strive to look at every angle possible, and the knowledge gained in this class will be a great aid.