An Equity-Based Approach to Normative Public Policy Analysis

Peter Linquiti
2024 NAPA Social Equity Leadership Conference
University of Connecticut
June 2024


Point of Departure: Fact/Value Dualism in Policy Analysis

- Empirical Thinking: Facts describe how world is understood to work
- Normative Thinking: Values describe how world ought to work
- Conflation of facts and values problematic
  - Different forms of inquiry needed for each
- Dichotomization of facts and values also problematic
  - Credible policy conclusions require a collection of empirical and normative claims (i.e., Ryan’s ‘network of beliefs’)

Trachtenberg School of Public Policy & Public Administration
Columbia College of Arts & Sciences

Berkeley Public Policy
The Goldman School

P. Linquiti - June 2024
Treatment of Normative Issues in Canonical Texts

- Fact/value dualism evident in all 6 texts
- 5/6 place heavy emphasis on empirical analysis
- Bardach & Patashnik: “Even if everyone accepts the same facts, each person may apply a different evaluative framework to these facts. There are no obvious or accepted ways to resolve philosophical differences of this type.”

Research Question

What competencies for normative policy analysis should MPP & MPA students, and practitioners, be expected to master?

Seven Proposed Competencies: A First Draft
1) Understand how normative issues enter classical analysis

1. Definition of Problem
2. Identification of Policy Options
4. Projection of Outcomes of Options
5. Analysis of Tradeoff Across Options
6. Reporting of Results

2) Understand normative issues adjacent to classical model

- Agenda Setting
- Standing
- Distributional Analysis
- Intersectionality
- Arc of History
3) Master a vocabulary for normative policy analysis

- Rights & Duties
- Freedom: Personal Liberty & Collective Democracy
- Equality: Opportunity, Access, Outcomes
  - Normatively acceptable inequalities
- Justice: Procedural, Distributional, Restorative
- Domestic Tranquility: Security & Stability
- Human Need & Material Well-Being

4) Understand moral cognition as it relates to public policy

- Moral Reasoning (System 2 thinking)
  - Consequentialism
  - Deontologism
- Moral Intuitionism (System 1 thinking)
  - Instinctive judgement about right & wrong
  - Followed by post-hoc rationalization that obscure emotional content
5) Apply tools of analytic political philosophy to policy issues

- Syllogistic Analysis
  - Empirical Claim + Normative Claim → Policy Conclusion

- Hypothetical example ...
  - Normative Claim: *Parents have inviolable right to control all aspects of their children’s healthcare*
  - Empirical Claim: *Vaccinations and gender-affirming care constitute healthcare*
  - Policy Conclusion: *Govt may neither mandate vaccination nor prohibit gender affirming care for children*
  - Disagree? Re-write the syllogism

- Competing syllogisms can illuminate & frame policy debates

6) Empirically characterize nature of personal moral values

- Step outside your worldview, study other views without bias, even those with which you disagree

- Not how folks *should* think about values; rather, how they *do* think about values

- Understanding others’ views ≠ agreeing with others’ views
7) Locate and characterize policy-specific normative concerns

- Whose values belong in the analysis?
  - The Analyst? The Client? The Public? Which Public?

- Values Elicitation: Public participation, engagement, inclusion

- Reflexivity: Prerequisite to values elicitation
  - Perspective Taking
  - Standpoint Awareness
  - Positionality
  - Veil of Ignorance
  - Principle of Charity

Takeaways

- Methods of normative policy analysis can/should be taught
  - All policy conclusions depend, in part, on normative claims
  - Toolbox with robust methods for normative analysis can foster social equity

- Seven proposed competencies only a first draft – what’s missing?
  - Comments & feedback welcomed & appreciated
  - plinquiti@berkeley.edu