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Social Welfare Policy & Services

Activity Journal #2

Alliance University

February 5, 2023

## **The Rationality of the 8 Key Elements**

In Chapter 3, we learned about the importance of Social Welfare Policy Research and a framework for policy analysis. The goal was to help us gain an understanding of the systematic process of how policy analysts engage in the investigation of social policies. In this Activity Journal, I will identify the eight key elements of policy frameworks as highlighted in Chapter 3, page 49. In addition, I will note the ways in which these elements are highly rational and systematic, and incompatible with the political process through which policies are adopted (Activity Journal #2 Prompt).

### **Eight Key Elements of Policy Frameworks**

- Policy frameworks systematically analyze a social policy or framework.
- Policy frameworks reflect the understanding that social policy is context sensitive, and there are competing priorities in all policy options.
- Policy frameworks employ rational methods of inquiry and analysis. The data used in policy analysis is derived from scientific inquiry and legitimate sources, and it is objectively interpreted and analyzed.
- The analytic method is explicit and all succeeding policy analyses should approximate the same conclusion.
- Policy analysis is based on the commitment to derive the largest possible social and economic benefit at the least possible social and economic cost. A good social policy is one that benefits at least one person (as he or she perceives his or her own self-interest) while at the same time hurting no one (a variation of the Pareto Optimality). Although rarely achieved in the real world of finite resources---and proliferating claims on them---policy analysts should nevertheless strive toward that optimality.
- Policy frameworks should attempt to take into account the unintended consequences of a particular policy or program. This could be aided by constructing multiple policy models of scenarios.
- Policy analysts should consider alternative social policies or alternative uses of present or future resources allocated to a given policy.
- Policy frameworks should employ models that examine the potential impact of a policy (or a series of policies) on other social policies, social problems, and the public good.

The rationality and systematic necessity of these 8 key elements cannot be overstated. They are essential in helping to ensure that policies are fair and just, not arbitrary, and repressive. The welfare state is rooted in fundamental principles that are geared towards protecting those unalienable rights of the most marginalized peoples in society. Therefore, it is incumbent that policy analysts have a point at which they can fulfill—at the very least—the bare minimum of their obligations. Ideally, these 8 key elements are designed to prevent arbitrary policies from running amok which have the potential to cause more harm than good.

There are countless examples of when more harm than good was caused due to a lack of an objective policy proposal process. For instance, the stop-question-and frisk program, or stop-and-frisk, in New York City, is the brainchild of the New York City Police Department (NYPD) which was a practice of temporarily detaining, questioning, and searching civilians and suspects on the street for weapons and contraband (Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia). During its tenure, stop-and-frisk was responsible for contributing to a culture of racial profiling where majority of those targeted were African American and Latino people.

Moreover, the political process which breathed life into this policy occurred during the years when former Mayor Rudolph Giuliani was in office (1994-2001). This era was wrought with partisan style policies such as stop-and-frisk that were centered around furthering Giuliani's (and later Mayor Michael Bloomberg's) political agendas. Since there was no rational and systematic means to analyze the effects of this policy, it led to unintended consequences such as the arrests of thousands of individuals as well as the shooting death of Amadou Diallo.

Thus, the eight key elements of policy frameworks are essential for helping to ensure that policies that are proposed are not geared towards causing harm to the public. There is no doubt that the policy of stop-and-frisk in New York City was incongruent with the mission and goals of

the welfare state (Karger, 2021). In a similar vein, some would argue that the policy of Chief Davis in Memphis, Tennessee in constructing the infamous SCORPION Unit which led to the recent, yet tragic death of Tyre Nichols was a poor policy decision as well. In closing, these examples are further evidence that policy analysts must possess and utilize a well-designed framework to help them analyze the potential effects of a policy.

## References

Karger, J.H. & Stoesz, D. (2018). American Social Welfare Policy: A pluralist approach. Eighth edition. Pearson.

NYCLU: ACLU of New York. <https://www.nyclu.org/en/stop-and-frisk-data>

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