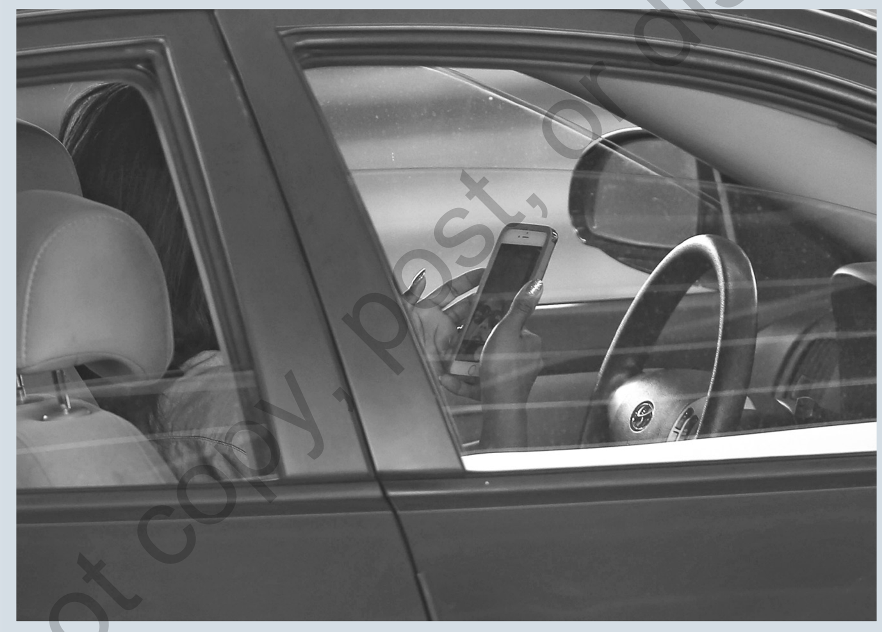
CHAPTER

4

Policy Analysis

AN INTRODUCTION



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Cell phones and driving. A driver uses a cell phone while behind the wheel of a car in New York City in 2016. As accidents involving drivers using phones or other personal devices mount across the country, New York lawmakers considered new measures to curb the practice. One included a test called the Textalyzer, which would allow police to examine phone records of drivers involved in accidents to determine if the phone was used while driving.

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CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

- Explain the nature of policy analysis.
- Show how policy analysis is used in the policymaking process.
- Compare and contrast the different types of policy analysis.
- Describe when certain types of analysis are needed.

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In 2013, a twenty-one-year-old East Texas driver checking her iPhone for messages crashed into an SUV, killing both the driver and a passenger and severely injuring a child. She was found guilty in a jury trial of criminally negligent homicide, and in a twist in what has become an increasingly common form of accidents linked to distracted driving, families of the victims filed a product liability lawsuit against Apple. They said that the company should have known that its phones would be used for texting under dangerous conditions and yet chose not to incorporate technology that could make texting while driving impossible. The argument is that Apple should have been aware that public education and laws on texting and driving have had little impact to date, suggesting the necessity of a technological solution to cell phone use by drivers.[1] Indeed, the National Safety Council reports that the use of cell phones while driving is responsible for some 1.6 million accidents a year in the United States, and more than 3,000 deaths. Texting while driving now accounts for one-quarter of all car accidents, and about 390,000 injuries each year.[2]

Accidents like the one in Texas have led the states to adopt varied laws on use of cell phones while driving. By 2018, forty-seven states and Washington, D.C., had banned text messaging for all drivers, and nearly all of them provide for primary enforcement; that is, one can be cited for this traffic violation alone. However, only sixteen states and the District of Columbia prohibit all drivers from using handheld cell phones while they are driving, and thirty-eight states and the District of Columbia ban all cell phone use by novice or teen drivers. Twenty-one states prohibit school bus drivers from any cell phone use while driving.

Are such laws changing driver behavior? Not very much, it seems. Recent surveys tell us that about 40 percent of teenagers say they texted or sent an email while driving within the past thirty days. Two-thirds of all drivers report they have used a cell phone while driving, and about three-quarters of young drivers say that they are very or somewhat confident they can safely text while driving, despite evidence to the contrary.[3]

In light of these findings, is there a case to be made for going beyond current restrictions on cell phone use while driving? For example, should *any* use of handheld cell phones, talking or texting, while driving be prohibited for all drivers? What about use of hands-free cell phones in cars, particularly smartphones with Bluetooth connectivity or a wired connection that can convert a cell phone to a hands-free device? This may be a distinction without a difference since studies suggest the real driver distraction is associated not with holding the phone but rather with talking on it. Studies have measured that risk as equal to driving with a blood alcohol level at the legal maximum, and the risk rises substantially if one is texting while driving.[4] For that matter, the infotainment systems built into many new cars, often allowing access to the internet and social networks, provide even more opportunity for taking one's eyes off of the road while driving.[5]

The implications of all this new technology are not lost on federal and state officials concerned with transportation safety. In December 2011, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), an independent federal agency, called for a total ban on cell phone use while driving (no calling, texting, or updating), citing the risks of distracted driving; it said that drivers should use cell phones only in an emergency. Its call was similar to one issued by the National Safety Council in 2009, but the decision to ban cell phones was left to the states.[6]

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Given the accident statistics we review here, would you favor the NTSB's recommendation to ban all cell phone use while driving? What about mandating that cell phone makers and cellular companies develop the technologies to prevent texting while driving? Should something also be done about other distractions in the car? In 2005, Washington, D.C., approved a cell phone restriction that also banned driving while "reading, writing, performing personal grooming, interacting with pets or unsecured cargo or while playing video games."[7] Is that going too far? Would a public education campaign be preferable to such restrictions, and would it work? As drivers and citizens, everyone should ask how policymakers can ultimately reach decisions like these that are effective, fair, and reasonable. This chapter demonstrates that policy analysis may be able to help answer these kinds of questions.

Chapter 3 elaborated on the policy process model, which is useful for understanding how policy analysis contributes to government decision making. Whether in testimony before legislative committees, studies and reports on the internet, or articles and reports, policy analysis is usually performed at the policy formulation stage. Here, policymakers search for the proposals they believe hold promise for addressing public problems. But policy analysis is also used throughout the policymaking process, starting with defining the nature of the problem right through implementing and evaluating policies within administrative agencies.

This chapter examines the nature and purposes of policy analysis, including basic steps in the policy analysis process. It also surveys the diverse ways in which analysts and research organizations engage in their work. The next two chapters go into greater detail on how we study public problems and seek solutions to them, using different methods and criteria to evaluate what might be done. No one expects these chapters to make students instant analysts; rather, their purpose is to convey the challenge of understanding and solving public problems and the need for clear, critical thinking about public policy, whether the issue is how to reduce texting while driving, how to lower student loan debt, or how to combat terrorism. Readers should learn what policy analysis is all about, how to question the assumptions that analysts make about their work, and how analysis of all kinds is used in support of political arguments and policy actions. We also try to direct readers to a variety of information sources about public policy and provide some guidelines for using them.

THE NATURE OF POLICY ANALYSIS

As discussed in chapter 1, the term *policy analysis* covers many different activities. It may mean examining the components of the policymaking process, such as policy formulation and implementation, or studying substantive public policy issues, such as ensuring access to health care services, or both. Policy analysis usually involves collecting and interpreting information that clarifies the causes and effects of public problems and the likely consequences of using one policy option or another to address them. Because public problems can be understood only through the insights of many disciplines, policy analysis draws from the ideas and methods of economics, political science, sociology, psychology, philosophy, and other scientific and technical fields (J. Anderson 2015; Weimer and Vining 2017).

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Most often, policy analysis refers to the assessment of policy alternatives. According to one scholar, it is “the systematic investigation of alternative policy options and the assembly and integration of the evidence for and against each option” (Jacob Ukeles, quoted in Patton, Sawicki, and Clark 2016, 22). Policy analysis is intended not to determine policy decisions but rather to inform the process of public deliberation and debate about those decisions. As in the case of cell phone use by drivers, analysis can provide useful information and comparisons to answer the kinds of questions people raise about what might be done about the problem. Ultimately, however, the public and its elected officials must decide what course of action to take.

Policy analysis, then, is part science and part political judgment. Doing analysis often means bringing scientific knowledge to the political process, or “speaking truth to power” (Wildavsky 1979). To put it in a slightly different way, policy analysis involves descriptive or empirical study, which tries to determine the facts of a given situation, as well as a normative or value-based assessment of the options. Policy analysis can never be reduced to a formula for solving public problems, but as we will show, it can bring valuable information to both policymakers and the public. In those cases where public involvement in decisions is important, analysis also may enhance the democratic process (Ingram and Smith 1993).

The study of public policy and the conduct of policy analysis are rarely simple matters. Public problems are usually complex and multifaceted, and people are bound to disagree over how serious they are, what might be done about them, and the role of government in relation to the private sector. Some problems, such as global climate change or the challenges posed by terrorism, are monumental. Others, such as how best to provide for a high-quality public school system or improve urban transportation, may be a bit easier to grasp. But they still are not simple. If they were, the course of action would be clear and not very controversial—removing snow from urban streets and collecting household trash, for example. Unfortunately, dealing with most public problems is not so easy.

What exactly does policy analysis do? One of its primary functions is to satisfy the need for pertinent information and thoughtful, impartial assessments in the policymaking process. This is particularly true when decisions must be made quickly because of impending deadlines or when the issues are politically controversial. Essentially, policy analysis involves looking ahead to anticipate the consequences of decisions and thinking seriously and critically about them. It is an alternative to “shooting from the hip” or making snap decisions based on ideology, personal experience, or limited or biased assessment of what should be done.[8] Even though such policy analysis is an intellectual or professional activity, it takes place within a governmental setting and thus reflects political forces as well (Dunn 2018). The way the analysis is done and its effects on decision making reflect that basic reality.

The role of politics is readily apparent in policy areas such as guaranteeing—or limiting—a woman’s right to choose an abortion, controlling illegal immigration, or ensuring that biological evolution is included in public school science curricula. All were subjects of great controversy in Kansas, Pennsylvania, and other states in the 2000s and 2010s. These issues touch on fundamental questions of values, and people may hold intense views on them. It is no surprise, then, that politics sometimes trumps policy analysis when decisions are made on such issues. Yet the political nature of policymaking is also

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Policy alternatives for urban services. Cities and states can choose among many policy alternatives as they try to meet recurring needs such as removing snow from city streets and collecting household waste. The photo shows heavy equipment clearing the street of snow on the Upper West Side of New York City on January 24, 2016. The city was hit with more than two feet of snow at that time.

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evident in nearly every policy area, from setting foreign policy objectives to reforming the nation's health care system. Policy choices usually reflect some combination of political preferences and various assessments of the problem and possible solutions to it. Policy analysis can help to clarify the problem, the policy choices available, and how each choice stands up against the different standards of judgment that might be used, such as those we emphasized in chapter 1: effectiveness, efficiency, and equity. Ultimately, however, policymakers and the public must choose what kinds of policies they prefer to have.

STEPS IN THE POLICY ANALYSIS PROCESS

The most common approach to policy analysis is to picture it as a series of analytical steps or stages, which are the elements in rational problem solving (Bardach and Patashnik 2016; MacRae and Whittington 1997). According to models of **rational decision making**, one defines a problem, indicates the goals and objectives to be sought, considers a range of alternative solutions, evaluates each of the alternatives to clarify their consequences, and then recommends or chooses the alternative with the greatest potential for solving the problem. This process is analogous to the way most of us make everyday decisions, although most of the time we do it much more casually.

Often, the so-called **rational-comprehensive approach** to analysis and decision making is not possible, and the less demanding **incremental decision making** is substituted. Still, essentially the same steps are involved. The only difference is that incremental decision making is more limited than the rational-comprehensive approach in the extent of analysis required; often it means making modest changes in policy or making them gradually. In political settings, incremental decision making is a more

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realistic approach, given ideological and partisan constraints and the ever-present pressure from interest groups and other constituencies. All can restrict the range of policy options to be taken seriously and the issues likely to be debated (J. Anderson 2015; Lindblom and Woodhouse 1993).

Figure 4-1 summarizes the major steps in policy analysis and the kinds of questions analysts typically pose. It also illustrates how each stage of analysis might apply to a

FIGURE 4-1 Steps in the Policy Analysis Process

STEPS	TYPE OF QUESTIONS	ILLUSTRATIONS
Define and analyze the problem	• What is the problem faced? • Where does it exist? • Who or what is affected? • How did it develop? • What are the major causes? • How might the causes be affected by policy action?	• How is cell phone use, including texting, related to automobile accidents? • What is the potential to reduce accident rates through policy action? • How does talking on a cell phone or texting compare to other distractions while driving, such as use of navigation systems, drinking coffee, or talking to passengers?
Construct policy alternatives	• What policy options might be considered for dealing with the problem?	• To reduce drivers' cell phone use, should state governments institute sanctions such as fines? • Should states try to educate drivers on cell phone use? • Should cell phones be disabled in a moving car if effective technology to do so becomes available?
Choose evaluative criteria	• What criteria are most suitable for the problem and the alternatives? • What are the costs of action? • What will the costs be if no action is taken? • What is the likely effectiveness, social and political feasibility, or equity of alternatives?	• What criteria are most important for regulation of cell phones? • Will people find these options acceptable? • Is it ethical to restrict individual behavior to achieve a social goal? • What options are the most effective in discouraging drivers from talking on their cell phones or texting?
Assess the alternatives	• Which alternatives are better than others? • What kind of analysis might help to distinguish better and worse policy alternatives? • Is the evidence available? If not, how can it be produced?	• Which policy options are most likely to reduce drivers' use of cell phones and texting: public education or economic sanctions such as fines? • How successful are the efforts of states and localities to regulate cell phone use and texting? • What kinds of evidence are needed to answer these questions?
Draw conclusions	• Which policy option is the most desirable given the circumstances and the evaluative criteria? • What other factors should be considered?	• Should state governments impose stiff fines on use of cell phones or texting while driving? • Would such fines be accepted as a legitimate governmental action? • If they work, how might such actions be made more acceptable to the public?

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specific policy problem. Each step is considered briefly here as a summary description of what policy analysis aspires to do. Chapters 5 and 6 examine them in greater detail. Note as well how these steps in the analysis process relate to the stages of the policymaking process discussed in chapter 3. Defining and analyzing problems is usually part of the agenda-setting stage of policymaking, and sometimes so is the construction of policy alternatives, especially if some potential alternatives are not considered seriously at all. Usually, however, the formal construction of alternatives is part of policy design and hence fits into the policy formulation stage of policymaking. Development of evaluative criteria also can be part of policy formulation, but it mainly falls into the stage of policy legitimation or approval. Assessing alternatives similarly can take place during both the formulation and legitimation stages of policymaking as policy actors consider which solutions they prefer and which may succeed politically. The same is true of the last stage of analysis, drawing conclusions. Analysts and policymakers may draw conclusions about preferred policy alternatives as policy is formulated, debated, and adopted. Since the policymaking process often is highly continuous, these analytic steps also can be found in the implementation, evaluation, and policy-change stages of policymaking as current policies are assessed critically and alternatives considered.

Define and Analyze the Problem

The first step in any policy analysis is to define and analyze the problem. Everyone knows what the word **problem** means, but for policy analysts the term specifically refers to the existence of an unsatisfactory set of conditions for which relief is sought, either through private means or from the government. Analysts therefore need to describe that set of conditions, usually through the collection of facts or data on its magnitude or extent. For example, who is affected by the problem, and how seriously? How long has the situation existed, and how might it change over the next several years or decades? How amenable is it to intervention through one means or another? The goals and objectives of such intervention, whether private or governmental, may not be clear to all concerned.

It may also be necessary to clarify what is meant by the set of conditions, to define it clearly, and to develop accurate measures of it. If the problem is homelessness in the United States, for example, an analyst will need to be clear about what is meant by homelessness, how to determine the extent of it, and which segments of the population are affected by it.

Beyond gathering basic information about the problem, analysts want to identify its causes, which is not always an easy task. Without a good idea of how and why the problem came about, however, it is difficult to think usefully about possible solutions to it. This kind of diagnosis of the problem is akin to what a physician does when a patient is ill or what a mechanic does when a car is not running properly. The importance of the diagnosis is clear if one looks at how policymakers are trying to cope with an issue as imposing as global terrorism. Without an understanding of the causes of terrorism—and they may be both numerous and difficult to deal with—policy actions are unlikely to be effective. To use a more concrete example, one has first to diagnose the reasons for

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International economic assistance. Members of the U.S. Army help load supplies at Beira International Airport in Mozambique on April 1, 2019, joining the humanitarian aid efforts following a cyclone that hit the country on March 14. The death toll from the cyclone was over 500 according to a Lusa report, with cholera cases from cyclone survivors jumping to over 270.

AP Photo/Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi

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failing public schools before a solution can be sought. Otherwise, there is little reason to believe that some of the proposed solutions (for example, formation of charter schools, use of school vouchers, or changing the nature of teacher evaluations) will improve the quality of education.

A long-standing dispute over international development assistance speaks to the importance of careful measures and analysis of public problems. Economic assistance to developing countries from twenty-nine donor nations, including the United States, totaled $147 billion in 2017, or about 0.3 percent of the donor nations' combined gross national income. The United States contributed about $35 billion, more than any other nation.[9] But does spending this much money provide what donor nations are hoping to achieve? Critics say the impact is far less than it should be, and they often call for reduced spending. Yet looking only at the overall statistical portrait misses the real success stories in economic assistance. Experience suggests that economic aid is most likely to work when it comes in relatively small, well-targeted, and tightly controlled investments rather than in large sums delivered to a government that may waste it.[10]

Construct Policy Alternatives

Once analysts believe they understand the problem, they begin to think about alternative ways of dealing with it. The policy typologies introduced in chapter 3 suggest several different approaches, such as regulation, subsidies, taxing and spending, market incentives, and public education or information provision. Governments have a finite number of actions from which to choose. Based on the available inventory of possibilities, analysts

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could construct a set of policy options for further study and consideration, such as the relative advantages of regulation and information disclosure for ensuring that financial markets operate properly and limit the risk of another economic collapse like the one that occurred in 2008 and 2009. Chapter 5 introduces some useful ways to lay out a range of policy alternatives.

Constructing policy alternatives is perhaps the most important stage in the policy analysis process. If analysts and policymakers cannot think of creative ways of solving problems, conventional approaches that may no longer be appropriate will continue to be used. Early in the process, therefore, analysts are called upon to think imaginatively and critically about how the problem might be addressed, both within government and outside it. One approach that has gained increasing acceptance, for example, is privatization, the transfer of public services from government to the private sector. Such private sector solutions, recommended by many policy analysts and organizations, and sometimes endorsed by the government, are said to be more appealing, and perhaps more effective, than reliance on a government agency, although the evidence on that is mixed. Chapter 5 suggests some fruitful ways for students of public policy to think creatively about generating policy options of this kind.

Choose Evaluative Criteria

When the policy alternatives have been identified, the analysis shifts to assessing their potential. This task calls for deciding on suitable evaluation criteria. As chapter 1 discussed, this text focuses on effectiveness or the likely success of proposals in solving the problem at hand, the economic costs and efficiency of proposals, and the implications for social equity. There are, however, many other appropriate criteria, such as political, administrative, and technical feasibility; environmental impacts; ethical considerations; and any number of political values, such as personal freedom, against which to assess policy proposals. These are further explored in chapter 6 and summarized in Figure 6-1.

No matter how long a list of potential evaluative criteria analysts might develop, some criteria will be more appropriate for a given problem than others. For example, for years the United States has been considering and funding the development of a missile defense system for protection against a ballistic missile attack from a so-called rogue nation like North Korea or Iran. On what basis should analysts evaluate the proposal, particularly in relation to other national security needs? One criterion would have to be technical feasibility. Can the missile defense system, which is based on highly complex computer software and state-of-the-art technology, do what it is supposed to do? Another would be the costs. The Pentagon spent more than $200 billion over four decades, with what critics say are relatively few positive results, and the cost of a fully deployed system would be much higher.[11] Is this outlay of taxpayer money reasonable in light of the gains to the nation's defense and the risk that the technology might not work as planned? Do new concerns over the nation's deficits and rising debt make a difference in how we appraise the value of such a program? How would an analyst go about determining the answer for a national missile defense, or for any comparable proposal, such as the Trump administration's desire to build an elaborate wall on the U.S.-Mexico border to deter illegal entry?[12]

Plenty of information is available about the missile defense system, but a good deal of it is contradictory, and analysts disagree heatedly about the core issues, such as technical

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feasibility. Any assessment of the desirability of creating and funding a system as complex as missile defense would be a demanding undertaking. Nevertheless, policymakers and analysts need to ask the questions and try to find answers.

For some policy actions—for example, whether and how to regulate or control gun ownership, or whether to permit concealed weapons to be carried in public places—the evaluative criteria would likely include political values. Personal rights will be weighed against other needs, such as protecting the public's safety and well-being. As this example indicates, conflicts may arise among criteria. The U.S. war on terrorism that began after the September 11 attacks raises similar questions: On what basis should policy analysts, citizens, and policymakers judge the suitability of policy options, such as military action against terrorist bases, economic development assistance to poor countries, or expanding offshore oil and gas drilling? Or the short-term national security implications of destroying terrorist operations versus the longer-term need to deal with the root causes of terrorism? In many policy disputes, much of the battle between proponents and opponents of government action is over which criteria to use as well as which conclusions to draw. Policymakers, analysts, and lobbyists of one stripe or another are likely to bring their ideological biases to these debates, such as a conviction by conservatives and many businesses that government regulation should be minimal and that economic growth is the primary national goal to be sought. Those beliefs tend to frame their selection of evaluative criteria and therefore their assessment of the problem and the solutions they are willing to consider.

Assess the Alternatives

With evaluative criteria at hand and a collection of possible courses of action to take, analysis turns to **assessing alternatives**. That is, the analysts ask which of the several alternatives that might be considered seriously is most likely to produce the outcome sought—whether it is to reduce the crime rate, improve the plight of the homeless, raise educational quality, reform the health care system, or rebuild the nation's infrastructure of highways and bridges. This exercise involves making judgments about how well each policy option fits in relation to the most relevant criteria. The analysts might rank the options in terms of overall desirability or consider them in terms of each criterion, such as effectiveness, economic cost, and equity.

Analysts have many ways to present the alternatives so that policymakers and other interested parties can understand the analysis and the choices they face. For example, if three policy options are offered for consideration, the analyst might present each in terms of its likely effectiveness, economic efficiency, and equity. Trade-offs are inevitable in this kind of decision making. Only rarely does a given policy option rank highest on all of the evaluative criteria. Analysts therefore attach weight to each criterion. Should governments focus on providing access to health care for those without insurance, as President Obama and Congress tried to do with the Affordable Care Act of 2010? Or should the sharply rising costs of health care be more of a concern? What about the mandate in the 2010 law that forced individuals to buy health care insurance, since repealed by a Republican Congress? Was that reasonable, and was it essential to achieve the other objectives of the health care reform law, as its defenders argued? As analysts consider more than a few conflicting bases for assessing policy options, the necessity for weighting criteria increases.

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Public policies on guns. Regulation of guns continues to be among the most controversial of public policies even as the public favors additional action. In this photo, attendees view Israel Weapon Industries rifles at the company's booth during the annual meeting of National Rifle Association members in Indianapolis, Indiana, on April 27, 2019.

Daniel Acker/Bloomberg via Getty Images

Draw Conclusions

Most studies draw conclusions about what kind of policy action is desirable, and some strongly advocate a position on the issues. Many studies do not recommend a single policy action. Rather, the analysts summarize their findings and draw conclusions about the relative merits of competing policy proposals but leave the choice of policy action to policymakers and the public.

Whichever approach is taken, all analysis is of necessity partial and limited. That is, analysis cannot ever be complete in the sense of covering every conceivable question that might be raised. It also cannot be free of limitations, because every method or tool that might be used is subject to some constraints. Policy analysts need to develop a robust ability to deal with uncertainty, which comes with the territory.

The later chapters consider these challenges and how to deal with them. Students will become familiar with the range of methods employed in the practice of public policy and how to use the different approaches, and therefore will be better prepared to cope with the challenges. For example, the amount of information available might be so overwhelming that finding the desirable course of action seems impossible; or there may be so little that no one can draw firm conclusions. Analysts may be faced with conflicting studies and interpretations that start with varying definitions of the problem and evaluative criteria that render their conclusions and recommendations difficult to compare and judge.

At this stage, we urge students to learn to ask critical questions about the information they collect, especially regarding its validity. Where did the information come from, and how reliable is the source? Is there any way to double-check the facts and their interpretation?

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Do the information and analysis seem on their face to be believable? Are there any signs of bias that might affect the conclusions that the study offers? If two or more studies contradict one another, why is that the case? Is it because of conflicting political ideologies, differences in the preferred policy actions, or disagreement in the way the problem is defined? Are the authors too selective in deciding what information should be presented and what can be left out? By gathering information from multiple sources and comparing different interpretations, students might find it easier to determine which of the studies is the most credible. Chapter 1 touched briefly on the need to develop these critical skills in appraising public policy information and studies, and the point is stressed throughout the book.

The best policy studies are those that are also sensitive to political reality. Their authors have made a special effort to understand the information needs of decision makers and the public, whether at the local, state, or national level. A common complaint within policy studies is that much analysis goes unread and unused either because it does not address the questions that decision makers think are important or because it is not communicated effectively to them so they can consider it. Analysis that is designed from the start to address these kinds of questions is far more likely to have an impact on the policy process (Bardach and Patashnik 2016; Lindblom and Cohen 1979; C. Weiss 1978).

TYPES OF POLICY ANALYSIS

No matter what kind of public problem needs a solution, from airline safety and urban transportation to persistent poverty or immigration, there is usually no shortage of policy studies that might apply. Some come from government offices themselves, such as the Government Accountability Office and the Congressional Research Service, or from executive agencies and departments such as the Food and Drug Administration, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of Defense. Policy analysis is becoming common at the state level (Hird 2005) and globally, both within government agencies and in the private and nonprofit sectors. A great number of studies, however, come from interest groups and independent policy research institutes or think tanks, many of which advocate specific political agendas (Rich 2004).

The abundance of policy studies reflects not only the dramatic rise in the number of think tanks since the 1970s but also the even more striking increase in the number of interest groups that seek to shape public opinion on the issues and affect the policy process. This shift in the political environment is most evident at the national level, where policy researchers and interest groups pay rapt attention to the debates in Congress and the activities of administrative agencies. Even at state and local levels of government, particularly in the larger states and cities, policy studies and advocacy are common, especially as national groups such as the conservative American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) seek to influence policymaking in the states.

The leading think tanks, such as the Brookings Institution, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Urban Institute, Center for Strategic and International Studies, and Heritage Foundation, are well endowed financially and can afford large professional staffs. Many receive significant and continuing support from foundations and industry or from government agencies for whom they conduct research under contract.[13]

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These research institutes are therefore generally well equipped to distribute their analyses throughout government, the Washington policy community, academia, and major media outlets nationwide (Ricci 1993; C. Weiss 1992). We provide a list of websites for think tanks and for other sources of policy studies at the end of the chapter. See the box "Steps to Analysis: Think Tank Positions on Policy Issues" for a comparison of the findings of two prominent think tanks, the conservative Heritage Foundation and the liberal Center for American Progress, on gun control.

One way to compare think tanks is to understand the kinds of policy studies or policy analyses available today, a matter addressed briefly in chapter 1. Policy analyses fall into three broad categories: scientific, professional, and political. All serve valid purposes, but they have varying goals and objectives and use different methods. Figure 4-2 summarizes the distinctions among the three perspectives.

FIGURE 4-2 Orientations to Policy Analysis

TYPE OF ANALYSIS	OBJECTIVES	APPROACHES	LIMITATIONS	EXAMPLES
Scientific	Search for "truth" and build theory about policy actions and effects	• Use the scientific method to test hypotheses and theories • Aim for objective and rigorous analysis • Attribute less importance to policy relevance than to advancing knowledge	• May be too theoretical and not adequately address information needs of decision makers	Academic social scientists and natural scientists, National Academy of Sciences, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
Professional	Analyze policy alternatives for solving public problems	• Synthesize research and theory to understand consequences of policy alternatives • Evaluate current programs and their effects • Aim for objectivity, but with goal of practical value in policy debate	• Research and analysis may be too narrow due to time and resource constraints • May neglect fundamental causes of public problems	Brookings Institution, Urban Institute, American Enterprise Institute, Government Accountability Office
Political	Advocate and support preferred policies	• Use legal, economic, and political arguments consistent with value positions • Aim to influence policy debate to realize organizational goals and values	• Often ideological or partisan and may not be credible • May lack analytic depth • Level of objectivity and rigor varies	Sierra Club, AFL-CIO, Chamber of Commerce, National Rifle Association, Heritage Foundation, American Legislative Exchange Council

Sources: Drawn in part from Peter House, *The Art of Public Policy Analysis* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: SAGE Publications, 1982); and David L. Weimer and Aidan R. Vining, *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*, 6th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2017).

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STEPS TO ANALYSIS

THINK TANK POSITIONS ON POLICY ISSUES

All think tanks conduct analysis and advocate positions on public policy issues, but some of these groups are committed to political or ideological standpoints that affect their analyses and recommendations. Gun control is one issue that think tanks of varying political persuasions have studied over the past several decades. The shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, in December 2012 and shootings at many other locations—such as a nightclub in Orlando, Florida; a high school in Parkland, Florida; a Walmart in El Paso, Texas; and a nightlife district in Dayton, Ohio—since then raise a number of questions related to use of firearms. These include the possible expansion of background checks required for those seeking to purchase a firearm, a limit on size of the ammunition clips available, a ban on assault-style weapons, and additional restrictions on gun purchases by those with diagnosed mental illness.

What Did the Heritage Foundation Say about Gun Control?

> *First*, we must identify the specific problems to be addressed involving school safety, mental illness, the cultural climate, and the misuse of firearms.
>
> *Second*, we must analyze potential solutions to the specific problems identified, examining the facts and taking into account the costs and benefits of the potential solutions to ensure that sound judgment governs the emotions inescapably attached to the subject.
>
> *Finally*, Americans must implement appropriate solutions in a manner that is consistent with the Constitution, including the Second Amendment guarantee of the right to keep and bear arms, the traditional role of the states in our federal system, and the central significance of family.

Source: John Malcolm and Jennifer A. Marshall, "The Newtown Tragedy: Complex Causes Require Thoughtful Analysis and Responses," January 17, 2013, available at www.americanprogress.org/issues/guns-crime/report/2013/12/13/80795/the-gun-debate-1-year-after-newtown/.

What Did the Center for American Progress Say about Gun Control?

> As a policy matter, most research suggests that making it more difficult for dangerous people to acquire guns will have a significant impact in reducing the more than 30,000 gun deaths that happen every year in America. As a political matter, polling conducted before and after

(Continued)

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(Continued)

> Newtown show[s] that 80 percent to 90 percent of Americans support expanding background checks, including most gun owners. . . .
>
> All potentially dangerous individuals need to be identified as such and prohibited from gun ownership. Many such people are already covered by the federal law—including felons, fugitives, some domestic abusers, and the dangerously mentally ill—but there are additional categories of people who should also be barred from possessing guns, such as violent misdemeanants, convicted misdemeanant stalkers, and certain domestic abusers who are not covered by the current law.

Source: Arkadi Gerney and Chelsea Parsons, "The Gun Debate 1 Year after Newtown: Assessing Six Key Claims about Gun Background Checks," December 13, 2013, available at www.americanprogress.org/issues/guns-crime/report/2013/12/13/80795/the-gun-debate-1-year-after-newtown/.

- What conclusions can you draw about how these two policy research organizations evaluate gun control?
- What are the similarities and differences in their positions?

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Scientific Approaches

Some individuals, especially academics, study public policy for scientific purposes—that is, to build understanding of public problems and the policymaking process. They seek "truth" through scientific methods, regardless of whether the knowledge is relevant or useful in some immediate way. For example, social science studies in the scientific category typically are not intended to influence public policy directly. Their purpose is, as one author put it, "to deepen, broaden, and extend the policy-maker's capacity for judgment—not to provide him with answers" (Millikan 1959, 167). On a substantive issue such as climate change, natural and social scientists may be interested mainly in clarifying what we know about climate change, its causes, and its probable effects on the environment, the economy, and people's well-being, not necessarily in recommending policy action.

Professional Approaches

As we have seen in this chapter, others study public policy for professional reasons, such as conducting policy analyses for government agencies, think tanks, or interest groups. Many policy analysts, both in and out of government, are committed to producing the best analysis possible, and they adhere to strong professional norms for economic analysis, modeling of complex situations, forecasting future trends, and program evaluation. The comparison of the Brookings Institution and the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) in the box "Working with Sources: Comparing Think Tanks" nicely illustrates the kinds

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of topics addressed by such analysts and how they express their purpose. Even though Brookings and AEI are usually described as left and right of center, respectively, both can be categorized as engaging in professional analysis.[14]

WORKING WITH SOURCES

COMPARING THINK TANKS

Policy research institutes, or think tanks, differ in many ways. Some are large and cover many policy issues, while others are small and highly specialized. Some aim for professional analysis of the issues, and others promote a policy or ideological agenda. Here, we highlight two prominent Washington think tanks that are well regarded for their analyses of policy issues. They also reflect different political philosophies: the Brookings Institution is usually characterized as slightly left of center, and the American Enterprise Institute as right of center.

As you read the think tanks' descriptions below, pay attention to specific language in their mission statements that points to their political philosophy and to possible bias in their analyses.

- Reviewing the topics that each covers, and the way those topics are summarized, can you detect differences between the two organizations in what they think is important, and the kinds of policies they will likely favor?

The Brookings Institution

Website: www.brookings.edu

Founded: 1922

Orientation and mission: Aims to "conduct high-quality, independent research" that leads to "pragmatic and innovative ideas on how to solve problems facing society." Its "300 leading experts in government and academia from all over the world . . . provide the highest quality research, policy recommendations, and analysis on a full range of public policy issues."

Sources of funding: Financed largely by an endowment and through support of philanthropic foundations, corporations, and private individuals.

Research programs fall into the following categories: Business and Industry, Cities and Regions, Defense and Security, Education, Global Development,

(Continued)

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(Continued)

Health Care Policy, International Affairs, Social Issues, U.S. Economy, and U.S. Government and Politics.

The American Enterprise Institute

Website: www.aei.org

Founded: 1938

Orientation and mission: Says that AEI is "committed to making the intellectual, moral, and practical case for expanding personal freedom, increasing individual opportunity, and strengthening the free enterprise system in America and around the world. Our work explores ideas that can further these goals, and AEI scholars take part in this pursuit with academic freedom." Also notes that AEI "operates independently of any political party and has no institutional positions," and that its "scholars' conclusions are driven by rigorous, data-driven research and broad-ranging evidence."

Sources of funding: Supported primarily by grants and contributions from foundations, corporations, and individuals.

Research programs include work in the following areas: Economics, Education, Foreign and Defense Policy, Health Care, Politics and Public Opinion, Poverty Studies, and Society and Culture.

Sources: Taken from the websites for Brookings and AEI. The statements are summaries of what each describes as its mission and current areas of research.

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Political Approaches

Some analysts may be as rigorous in the methods they use as the professionals, but they are also committed to specific policy values and goals and sometimes to ideological and partisan agendas. As one would expect, they try to emphasize the studies and findings that help to advance those values and goals. This kind of policy study can be described as political, rather than professional or scientific. Analysts who work for interest groups or activist organizations, such as the National Organization for Women, Planned Parenthood, ALEC noted earlier, or the National Rifle Association, are especially likely to have this orientation. So too are those who work for political parties and ideological groups, such as Americans for Democratic Action, the American Civil Liberties Union, or the American Conservative Union. The two think tanks compared in the previous "Steps to Analysis" box (pp. 125–126), the Heritage Foundation and the Center for American Progress, fit into this category of political policy analysis because of their strong commitments to conservative and liberal policies, respectively. In today's hyper-partisan environment, those

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working for political or ideological groups may face accusations that their work can be so biased as to lose value. Even scholars at the top think tanks often blur the line between professional analysis and advocacy, contributing to what many today see as potentially biased analysis.

WHAT KIND OF ANALYSIS IS NEEDED?

No matter what policy area is involved, there is never a single correct way to conduct a policy study or one set of methods or tools to use. The next two chapters have more to say about appropriate methods and tools, but here it is worth emphasizing that regardless of whether the policy research falls into the scientific, professional, or political category, analysts face important choices about the kind of assessment needed for a given study and what approaches to use.

Deal with Root Causes or Make Pragmatic Adjustments?

One of the basic questions that all analysts must answer is whether they should focus on the **root causes** of public problems or examine policy actions that might ameliorate a pressing problem but do nothing about its underlying causes. Political scientist James Q. Wilson argued for the latter view in his influential book *Thinking about Crime* (1977, 55–59). The "ultimate causes cannot be the object of policy efforts," he said, because they cannot be changed. As he explained, criminologists, for example, know that men commit more crimes than women, and younger men more than older ones. It is a scientifically correct observation, Wilson said, but not very useful for policymakers concerned about reducing the crime rate. Why not? The answer is that society can do nothing to change the facts. So rather than address the root causes of crime, he suggested that policymakers concentrate on what governments can do to reduce the crime rate, or deal with what some call the **proximate causes**, or immediate causes, of the problem:

> What is the condition one wants to bring into being, what measure do we have that will tell us when that condition exists, and what policy tools does a government (in our case, a democratic and libertarian government) possess that might, when applied, produce at reasonable cost a desired alteration in the present condition or progress toward the desired condition? (59)

In contrast, the distinguished scholar Charles E. Lindblom (1972, 1) wrote that the kind of policy analysis illustrated by Wilson's statement can become a "conservative and superficial kind of social science" that fails to ask fundamental questions about the social and economic structures of society. It considers, according to Lindblom, "only those ways of dealing with policy that are close cousins of existing practices," and therefore reinforces a prevailing tendency to maintain current policies and practices even when they may be unsuccessful in addressing the problem.

Analysts who favor Lindblom's perspective would examine the fundamental or root causes as well as the proximate causes of public problems. These analysts would not

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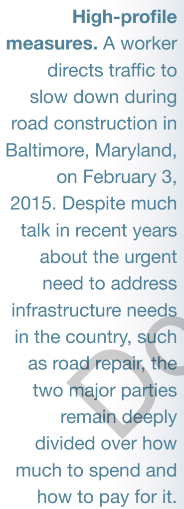
dismiss as fruitless idealism the possibility of taking action on the root causes of problems in some circumstances. For example, the George W. Bush White House announced in July 2005 that the president's energy bill, then nearing approval in Congress, would help to address "the root causes of high energy prices," chiefly by expanding domestic production of energy.[15] Critics of the controversial energy bill were just as quick to suggest that the root cause most in need of attention was the nation's increasing appetite for energy, and that intensive programs fostering energy conservation and efficient energy use were needed more than an increase in supply. Both sides were correct in emphasizing the need to address not just the high price of energy in 2005 but the underlying causes of the problem. There are similar disputes today over how best to address legal and illegal immigration into the United States, the opiate epidemic in some cities and states, and the affordable housing crisis in cities with exceptionally high costs of living.

We should note that even an incremental adjustment in policy that does not look seriously at root causes of the problems nevertheless can make a big difference. Consider the imposition of a national minimum drinking age of twenty-one that was intended to combat the high percentage of automobile accidents attributable to alcohol, especially among younger drivers. In 1984, the federal government decided to deny a percentage of federal highway funds to states that refused to comply with the minimum drinking age requirement. An assessment of the policy's results in Wisconsin showed that it had "immediate and conclusive effects on the number of teenagers involved in alcohol-related crashes." Accident rates declined by 26 percent for eighteen-year-olds and 19 percent for nineteen- and twenty-year-olds (Figlio 1995, 563).



High-profile measures. A worker directs traffic to slow down during road construction in Baltimore, Maryland, on February 3, 2015. Despite much talk in recent years about the urgent need to address infrastructure needs in the country, such as road repair, the two major parties remain deeply divided over how much to spend and how to pay for it.

Hassan Sarbakhshian/Bloomberg via Getty Images

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Comprehensive Analysis or Short-Term Policy Relevance?

Should analysts use the most comprehensive and rigorous approaches available to ensure the credibility of their results, even though doing so may take longer and cost more? Or should they aim for a less comprehensive and less rigorous study that might provide pertinent results faster and cheaper, even at some risk of the credibility of the results? The answer depends on the nature of the problem under consideration. The most complex, controversial, and costly policy choices might require the most comprehensive analysis, while more limited studies might suffice in other situations.

Academic scientists (social and natural) tend to favor rigorous, comprehensive studies. They place a high value on methodological precision because they believe that only demanding scientific investigations produce knowledge that inspires confidence. Much the same is true for medical and pharmaceutical research where only the most comprehensive and rigorous scientific studies are considered to be trustworthy. Sometimes, however, a study can take so long to complete that it has less impact on policy decisions than it might have had if the results were known earlier. For example, in the 1980s, the federal government sponsored a decadelong study of the causes and consequences of acid rain, at a very high cost of $500 million. Although widely viewed as first-rate scientific research, the study also was faulted for failing to address some critical topics in time to influence decision makers. By most accounts, it had less influence than it should have had on the adoption of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, the first national effort to deal seriously with acid rain (Russell 1993).

Professional policy analysts are often distinguished from social science researchers in part because of the analysts' interest in applied policy research. The professionals are far more likely to aim their research at policymakers and other policy actors as evident in the brief descriptions of Brookings and AEI provided in the "Working with Sources" box.

Analysts associated with advocacy organizations in the "political" category shown in Figure 4-2 are the most likely to emphasize short-term policy relevance. They also typically bring a strong commitment to the values embodied in the organization. It is not surprising that the studies and reports by the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Sierra Club are unabashedly pro-environment, while those by the National Rifle Association and the Nuclear Energy Institute support gun ownership and nuclear power, respectively. Such policy advocacy does not necessarily mean that the studies are invalid; many may be just as well done and valuable as those released by ostensibly more objective research institutes. One assessment of the liberal Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, for example, described its analyses as "academically rigorous" yet clearly "intended to influence lawmakers, aides, lobbyists, and journalists." The center had become, the author noted, "a powerful source of knowledge that helps out-of-power Democrats counter White House experts at the Office of Management and Budget."[16] Because of these kinds of political commitments, however, reports from advocacy organizations warrant a critical reading to detect any possible bias (Rich 2004).

Consensual or Contentious Analysis?

Should analysts adhere closely to consensual norms and mainstream public values, or should they challenge them and propose new values or new ways of thinking about the

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problem under consideration? Political theorist Martin Rein (1976) argued for what he called a value-critical approach to policy research, urging analysts to be skeptical of and distrust orthodoxy. He advocated approaches to policy study that made the analyst a "moral critic" who questions the value and belief assumptions behind policy research. He suggested three ways to engage in such research, with increasing degrees of critical inquiry: using consensual or mainstream approaches, using contentious or value-critical approaches, and—the most radical—using paradigm-challenging approaches.

Most contemporary policy analyses fall into the first category, a much smaller number into the second, and a negligible number into the third. Yet one could argue that many public policies today are very much in need of bold new thinking and radical challenges, much as Rein suggested in the mid-1970s. Consider the case of health care policy, the subject of chapter 8. With sharply rising costs and widespread dissatisfaction with access to and delivery of health care services today, some analysts and policymakers are beginning to suggest the need for radical change that goes beyond the Affordable Care Act of 2010, such as the calls by progressives within the Democratic Party for "Medicare for all" to start a new conversation on health care policy. Much the same is true as analysts and decision makers around the country confront the various federal and state entitlement programs—from Social Security and Medicare to Medicaid and public employee pension systems—and seek innovative and sometimes radical solutions to deal with dire forecasts of rising costs.

Reliance on Rational Analysis or Democratic Politics?

Policy analysts are trained to engage in the rational assessment of public problems and their solutions, and they often use economic analysis and other quantitative methods to find the most logical, efficient, and (they hope) effective ways to deal with public problems. But should analysts also try to foster **democratic political processes**, such as citizen involvement (deLeon 1997; Gormley 1987; Jenkins-Smith 1990)? As noted, some advocates of policy analysis believe that public problems and policy choices are so complex that technical scientific analysis is essential to reach a defensible decision. These views sometimes conflict with the expectation that the public and elected officials are ultimately responsible for choosing the policy direction for the nation. In short, as citizens, we value rigorous analysis, but we also expect democracy to prevail unless there is some good reason (for example, national security) to limit public involvement.

Consider the case of nuclear waste disposal in terms of this dilemma. Federal government analysts and most of those working for the nuclear industry and technical consulting companies have relied on complex risk assessment, a form of policy analysis dealing with threats to health and the environment. Nearly all of the studies have concluded that risks from the radioactive waste to be housed in a disposal facility are relatively minor and manageable, even over the thousands of years that the proposed repository at Yucca Mountain, Nevada, was to contain the waste without significant leakage. Critics of the government's position, however, including the state of Nevada, countered that the scientific questions were far from settled and that the public's concerns about nuclear waste have not been satisfactorily addressed. They called for a decision-making process that allowed for greater citizen involvement and consultation, no matter how long it would

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take to build public trust (Dunlap, Kraft, and Rosa 1993; Wald 2002). Proponents of the waste site in turn asserted that the critics merely reflect the common NIMBY (not in my backyard) syndrome; they argue that local opposition to such waste repositories and other unwanted facilities is inevitable and cannot be the sole basis for a policy decision.

How can this kind of tension between reliance on technical analysis and democracy be resolved? Does the best solution lie in more analysis of these various risks and better management by the federal government and the states? Or should more weight be given to the public's fears and concerns, and should policymakers turn to a more open and democratic political process for making the necessary choices?

Other Aspects of Policy Analysis

The differences among the fundamental types of policy research are evident in the great variety of academic journals and other professional outlets, many of which are available on the internet. Some publications, for example the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, emphasize the economic aspects of public policy, while others, such as the *Policy Studies Journal* and the *Review of Policy Research*, stress institutional and political factors. A few journals, such as *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, examine the ethical aspects of public policy, and nearly every law journal discusses the legal considerations of public policy. We urge students to browse the websites as well as the journals in their campus libraries to see what information is available on different topics. Most think tanks and advocacy organizations (and most government agencies) publish their studies, either in full or summarized, on their web pages as well as in journals, books, and reports.

The primary focus of this text is substantive policy analysis, which aims at answering questions such as what effects school voucher programs have on the quality of education, or whether regulation of cell phone use in cars reduces accident rates. But a great deal of work in the public policy field, especially by political scientists, focuses instead on describing how government and policymakers actually behave. Such work tries to address questions such as how Congress makes decisions on defense policy or agricultural subsidies, and how the White House influences agency regulatory decision making (J. Anderson 2015).

The perspectives and approaches of policy analysis apply to institutional issues as well as to substantive policy questions (Gormley 1987). This kind of analysis is especially helpful for examining proposals for institutional change. For example, institutional policy analysis might address a question such as what consequences could result if environmental protection policy were to be decentralized to the states (Rabe 2010, 2019). Or, in light of controversies over both the 2000 and 2016 presidential elections, and in some states in the 2018 elections, what might be done to ensure that voters have sufficient opportunity to cast their ballots and that the votes are counted accurately? Or what effects do state "voter ID" laws have on voter turnout and the perceived legitimacy of elections (see chapter 13)?

Ethical issues in the conduct and use of policy studies deal with honesty and scruples. For example, what ethical obligations do analysts have to design and conduct their studies in a certain manner? To what extent are they influenced by the source of funding, particularly when the funds come from interest groups with a stake in the outcome, such as the tobacco companies that want to learn about the impact of antismoking initiatives? Does the analyst work primarily for the client who pays for the study, or does the analyst have

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a duty to represent the larger public interest (Weimer and Vining 2017)? At a minimum, most analysts would agree that they are obliged to be open and transparent about their values and policy preferences, their funding sources, the methods they use, the data they collect, and any critical assumptions they make in the analysis of the data and the conclusions they reach (J. Bowman and Elliston 1988; Tong 1986). Chapter 6 goes further into the criteria, including ethical standards, that can be used to evaluate policy alternatives.

CONCLUSIONS

The example at the beginning of the chapter on cell phone use and driving shows the challenge of making policy decisions when so many questions can be raised about the problem and the implications of taking action. Yet most students and practitioners of public policy are convinced that analysis can advance solutions by clarifying the problem, collecting information, and suggesting ways to make decisions. For that reason, this chapter surveys the practice of policy analysis and shows how it relates to the policymaking process and to politics in general. The chapter also emphasizes that there are many different types of analysis, and that the one that is used in a given case should reflect the particular challenges that are faced.

Today, analysis is ubiquitous, and it enters policy debate everywhere it occurs. Analysis is conducted in formal think tanks, interest groups, executive agencies, and legislative committees at all levels of government. Its thoroughness, objectivity, and purpose vary markedly, as one might expect. Students of public policy therefore need to be alert to the strengths and weaknesses of particular policy studies and prepared to question everything: the assumptions, the methods, and the conclusions. At the same time, however, students need to explore the many available sources of policy information and to think creatively about how to become engaged with contemporary policy problems.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Consider the case of using cell phones while driving a car, whether for talking or for texting. Given the information provided in the chapter, would you favor restricting drivers' use of handheld cell phones? What about hands-free cell phones? What about restrictions on texting? How would you defend this policy choice?
2. Much of the policy analysis that is used in public debates today comes from interest groups that are strongly committed to one side of the issue or another, or from think tanks that espouse an ideology, on the left or the right. Do you think these policy commitments make the quality of the analysis suspect? Why or why not?

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3. Review the two contrasting think tank positions on gun control presented in the "Steps to Analysis" box on pages 125–126. Which do you think is more persuasive? Why is that?
4. Should policy analysts try to deal with the fundamental causes of social problems, such as crime, poverty, and homelessness, or aim instead for a more pragmatic and limited approach that may be more realistic and more politically acceptable? Why do you think so?

KEYWORDS

assessing alternatives 121

democratic political processes 132

incremental decision making 116

problem 117

proximate causes 129

rational-comprehensive approach 116

rational decision making 116

root causes 129

SUGGESTED READINGS

James E. Anderson, *Public Policymaking*, 8th ed. (Stamford, Conn.: Cengage Learning, 2015). One of the best general treatments of the U.S. policymaking process.

Eugene Bardach and **Eric M. Patashnik**, *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*, 5th ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2016). A short but readable guide to the essentials of policy analysis, particularly well suited for student readers.

Carl V. Patton, David S. Sawicki, and **Jennifer J. Clark,** *Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016). One of the leading texts in policy analysis, with a focus on methods for basic or quick analysis.

Deborah Stone, *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*, 3rd ed. (New York: Norton, 2012). An imaginative critique of conventional policymaking and policy analysis, with an emphasis on the role of politics and values in policymaking.

David L. Weimer and **Aidan R. Vining,** *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*, 6th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2017). A widely used text in policy analysis that draws heavily from economics.

SUGGESTED WEBSITES

www.aei.org. American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, a major policy research institute that tends to favor conservative positions.

www.alec.org. American Legislative Exchange Council, a national conservative research institute that assists state legislators in advancing the principles of limited government and free markets.

www.brookings.edu. Brookings Institution, a major policy research organization that is usually described as somewhat left of center or liberal.

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www.cato.org. Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank.

www.cbpp.org. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a liberal policy research organization that focuses on fiscal policy and its effects on low- and moderate-income families and individuals.

www.cei.org. Competitive Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank and advocacy organization.

www.csis.org. Center for Strategic and International Studies, a think tank that focuses on global challenges and foreign and defense policy issues.

www.heartland.org. Heartland Institute, a conservative think tank.

www.heritage.org. Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank.

www.hudson.org. Hudson Institute, a conservative think tank.

www.publicagenda.org. Nonpartisan briefings on policy and polling; news, legislation, and studies; and research sources.

www.rand.org. RAND Corporation, the first organization to be called a think tank.

www.rff.org. Resources for the Future, a think tank specializing in economic analysis of environmental and natural resource issues.

www.urban.org. Urban Institute, a leading policy research center that deals with diverse urban issues such as housing, poverty, employment, health, crime, and the economy.

LEADING GENERAL JOURNALS OF PUBLIC POLICY

Journal of Policy Analysis and Management

Journal of Policy History

Journal of Public Policy

Policy Sciences

Policy Studies Journal

Review of Policy Research

MAJOR PROFESSIONAL NEWSWEEKLIES WITH POLICY COVERAGE

CQ Magazine

National Journal

NOTES

1. Matt Richtel, “Phone Makers Could Cut Off Drivers. Why Don’t They?” *New York Times*, September 25, 2016.
2. The latest studies can be found on the council’s website: www.nsc.org.
3. Statistics on distracted driving and driver use of cell phones can be found at www.textinganddrivingsafety.com and www.distraction.gov.
4. See Matt Richtel, “In Study, Texting Lifts Crash Risk by Large Margin,” *New York Times*, July 28, 2009; and Tara Parker-Pope, “A Problem of the Brain, Not the Hands: Group Urges Phone Ban for Drivers,” *New York Times*, January 13, 2009.

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5. See Bill Vlasic, “Designing Dashboards with Fewer Distractions,” *New York Times*, July 5, 2013.
6. See Matt Richtel, “Federal Panel Urges Cell Phone Ban for Drivers,” *New York Times*, December 13, 2011; and Joan Lowy, “Safety Council: Ban Cell Phones While Driving,” Associated Press release, January 12, 2009. Data on state and local action on use of cell phones while driving can be found at the website for the safety council: www.nsc.org.
7. See Damien Cave, “Note to Drivers: Lose the Phone (and Lipstick),” *New York Times*, October 1, 2005; and Katie Hafner and Jason George, “For Drivers, a Traffic Jam of Distractions,” *New York Times*, March 3, 2005.
8. Practical policy analysis is also sometimes referred to as “quick analysis” or “quickly applied basic methods,” but the intention is to offer an analytical and objective assessment of the issues, even when policymakers must make decisions quickly. See Behn and Vaupel (1982) and Patton, Sawicki, and Clark (2016).
9. The data are taken from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report “Development Aid Stable in 2017 with More Sent to Poorest Countries,” available at www.oecd.org.
10. Michael M. Weinstein, “The Aid Debate: Helping Hand, or Hardly Helping?” *New York Times*, May 26, 2002.
11. For a review of the missile system’s challenges, see Eliot Marshall, “Missing the Mark,” *Science* 342 (November 22, 2013): 926–929. See also Editorial Board of the *New York Times*, “The Dangerous Illusion of Missile Defense,” *New York Times*, February 11, 2018; and Paul Sonne, “Pentagon Seeks to Expand Scope and Sophistication of U.S. Missile Defenses,” *Washington Post*, January 16, 2019.
12. See Steven Pifer, “The Limits of U.S. Missile Defense,” Brookings Institution, March 30, 2015. Current data on the nation’s missile defense system can be found at the website for the Defense Department’s Missile Defense Agency: www.mda.mil/.
13. For example, many organizations and think tanks on the right side of the political spectrum have received substantial funding from foundations supporting conservative causes and publications. Among the most notable are the John M. Olin Foundation, Scaife Family Foundation, Koch Family Foundations and Philanthropy, Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, and Adolph Coors Foundation. For an objective overview of the role of conservative foundations, see Shawn Zeller, “Conservative Crusaders,” *National Journal*, April 26, 2003, 1286–1291.
14. Critics of both think tanks have noted that many of their scholars also write op-ed articles and engage in various forms of advocacy, such as testifying before congressional committees and sometimes sitting on corporate boards. See, for example, Eric Lipton, Nicholas Confessore, and Brooke Williams, “Think Tank Scholar or Corporate Consultant? It Depends on the Day,” *New York Times*, August 8, 2016.
15. The statement was made by White House spokesperson Scott McClellan and is reported in Carl Hulse, “As Energy and Highway Bills Near Completion, Congress Gives Itself a Hand,” *New York Times*, July 29, 2005.
16. See Andrew Taylor, “Democrats’ Go-To Guy Gets the Facts Straight,” *CQ Weekly*, March 7, 2005, 552–553.

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