

SECOND EDITION

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Public Policy

AN EVOLUTIONARY APPROACH

JAMES P. LESTER JOSEPH STEWART, JR.

PUBLIC POLICY

An Evolutionary Approach

SECOND EDITION

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*To William Howard Lester
and Paula F. Sutherland*

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PREFACE

For several reasons, this is a particularly exciting time to study public policy. Moreover, it is likely to continue to be so for the foreseeable future. First, public policy study has become one of the fastest-growing subfields in political science. In less than 30 years we have seen enormous growth in student interest in this area, in course offerings at both undergraduate and graduate levels, in graduate programs, in policy institutes, and in research conducted in this subfield. Second, the existing literature on policy studies has witnessed enormous intellectual growth over the past two decades, and many new conceptual developments have occurred. Finally, the nature of American public policy increasingly requires policy analysis as a guide to policy design and redesign. Governments at all levels (i.e., federal, state, and local) will continue to need advice from policy analysts in the years to come as policy debates continue to proliferate in such areas as welfare reform, environmental problems, crime policy, and educational reform.

Many areas of the policy cycle have witnessed significant intellectual growth as far as understanding the determinants of each phase. Yet, the major problem for students of public policy (and perhaps the major challenge for teachers) is that a sense of history is missing in most contemporary policy analysis texts. So little of this evolutionary development has been accumulated in a single textbook that students may not fully appreciate the amount of intellectual growth that has taken place over the past 30 years. To appreciate more fully the extent of policy evolution, it is necessary to examine substantive policy across time. Most recently, a number of scholars have suggested that we may gain a substantially better understanding of the contours of public policy by examining its evolution over a period of at least a decade. By doing so, we begin to appreciate how systematic patterns have developed over time and across several areas of policy.

This book offers a unique approach to introducing students to policy studies by using a diachronic, or evolutionary, approach so that the students may fully appreciate the dynamic developments that have taken place in our understanding of both the policy process and several substantive areas of public policy. In fact, one of the clearest trends to emerge in the entire discipline of political science over the past 30 years is the need for historical or longitudinal analysis instead of contemporary or cross-sectional analysis. Therefore, we explicitly adopt the position that we can more fully appreciate and understand public policy

developments by viewing them from an historical or evolutionary perspective. This simply means that we propose to use an historical (or longitudinal) approach in a conceptual, rather than a statistical, sense.

In developing this theme, the book is organized into four sections. The first section of the book introduces the student to the subfield of policy studies and notes several tensions in the field. It also discusses alternative approaches to policy analysis, what we mean by “models,” and means of evaluating models. The second section of the book is devoted to the evolution of research and thinking about various aspects of the policy cycle, noting the evolution of our conceptual understanding from the origin of the concept of each stage to the present time. The third section of the book explores the evolution of our thinking in four substantive areas of public policy, including education, welfare, crime, and the environment. This section provides an analysis of public policy from an historical perspective and thus complements our approach in the first two sections by drawing together the various trends identified in them. The final section provides an explanation about the tendency for policy analyses to be utilized (or not to be utilized) by decision makers and draws conclusions from the other three sections with regard to the evolution of public policy and policy studies.

TO THE INSTRUCTORS USING THIS BOOK:

The following discussion provides some useful advice to the professors adopting this book and the students who take a course in public policy studies. For the instructors, we have found that an old Chinese proverb provides much insight into how students learn and how professors might approach this course. The old Chinese proverb says, “*Tell me and I will forget... Show me and I might remember... Involve me and I will remember.*” Thus, it is clear that students learn in at least three ways. First, all students need some basic *information* about the topic. They also need some type of *experience* with the topic at hand. Finally, they need to *reflect upon and apply* what they have been told or exposed to that week. Therefore, one could adopt three separate activities directed toward the students. First, each week might begin with a brief *lecture* on the topic for that particular week. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings for that week’s topic within the context of a large group. The second meeting each week could then be devoted to a *videotape* (or guest lecture) in order to provide the students with some *experience* with the topic. Finally, the week may end with a small group *discussion* for reflection and application of the material that has been presented that particular week. These three sets of activities are mutually reinforcing and they provide the student with multiple kinds of learning activities that hold their interest and make the course more stimulating and engaging. Guest lecturers and small group discussions represent powerful

alternatives (as well as supplements) to the traditional lecture format. By augmenting large class meetings and lectures with these other activities, teachers can share some of the responsibility for instruction with their students. The students thus become more active participants in this learning context, unlike in the traditional, more passive, approach wherein they are constrained by listening and notetaking.

TO THE STUDENTS WHO DO PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH:

The Internet (or the World Wide Web) is a tremendous resource for you as you conduct your policy analysis for the course. Using the Internet, you can gather all kinds of statistical information from government agencies, get other kinds of useful information from Congress or the White House, and even order books and obtain articles on your chosen topic. The purpose of this brief guide is to get you started on the Internet so that you can access the kind of information that is readily available to you for your research.

For starters, you may want to consult Andrew T. Stull's *Political Science on the Internet* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997) and Gregory M. Scott and Stephen M. Garrison's *The Political Science Student Writer's Manual* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998). See Chapter 13 on how to do policy analysis papers.

We strongly recommend that you consider a very useful research resource called www.policy.com, which is the Internet's largest and most widely used policy news and information service, offering daily, in-depth policy news and analysis from the world's leading think tanks, advocacy groups, trade associations, foundations, and government agencies. It provides nonpartisan policy information and thus does not take policy positions; rather, it aggregates policy content from various independent content providers, which range widely in viewpoint and area of expertise. It is entirely free, meaning that it has no registration fee and no subscription fee. It covers today's pressing issues in such areas as the environment, education, crime, welfare, and immigration, to name only a few.

[Policy.com](http://www.policy.com) includes such organizations as the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Enterprise Institute, The Brookings Institution, The Cato Institute, Common Cause, The Economic Policy Institute, The Heritage Foundation, The Levy Institute, The National League of Cities, Resources for the Future, RAND, The Sierra Club, and the Urban Institute, just to name a few. Gaining access to these top public policy research organizations could not be easier. To access these resources, visit www.policy.com or use **Keyword: policy** on America Online or e-mail info@policy.com, or call 202-737-4900.

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will then give you a list of research areas by issue (e.g., agriculture, crime, environment, education, welfare and housing, immigration, etc.). Select the broad issue area that interests you (e.g., education, environment, etc.). The display will then provide you with more specific issue areas within a broad area such as education (e.g., bilingual education, school choice, higher education, etc.). Select the specific issue within the broad topic that interests you. For example, if you are interested in doing a paper on environmental policy, then you might search the topic of “global warming.” Point the mouse to that locale and you will see a display of recent research on this topic from various think tanks and interest groups. You might also want to search the U.S. government agencies for this topic. For example, you might want to know what publications or documents are available from the executive branch on the subject of “global warming.” The possibilities are endless for your search.

Another useful resource is **InfoTrac College Edition**, which is a fully searchable online university library containing complete articles and their images. Its database gives you access to over 600 scholarly and popular publications including magazines, journals, encyclopedias, and newsletters. It is updated daily and includes articles dating back as much as four years. Every article within the database can be easily printed for reading and reference purposes or quickly arranged into a bibliography. Student subscribers must purchase a personalized “account ID number” that gives them unlimited access to InfoTrac for four full months at any hour of the day, anywhere they happen to be. For more information on this resource, point your web browser to <http://www.infotrac-college.com/wadsworth>.

Still another useful resource is **Primary Source Media**, which provides students with declassified government documents. To access this resource, point your web browser to www.psmmedia.com/ddrs.htm. With this information, you can research, analyze, and evaluate post–World War II trends and events and bring your understanding of domestic and international events to new heights. Released by presidential libraries, these records of the twentieth century provide a foundation for research in political science and public policy. These easily accessible digital facsimiles can be downloaded and printed as required.

After first consulting these three resources, you will also want to access the Internet’s (cost-free) search engines, including Lycos, Yahoo, Infoseek, WebCrawler, HotBot, etc. Any of these search engines will work for you, and you should probably consult all of them to be comprehensive in your various searches. Next, you must identify your keyword(s) for your search. For example, let’s say you are doing a paper on welfare policy in the United States. Various keywords might be “poverty rates United States” or “welfare policy United States” or “welfare reform,” etc. Try any number of keywords to access what you need.

Another way to obtain information is to go directly to the government organization's Web page. For example, see the following sites:

Congress:

See <http://thomas.loc.gov/> for bills introduced and how members voted.

See <http://thorplus.lib.purdue.edu:80/gpo/> for a history of the bills pending and passed.

See <http://www.vote-smart.org/reference/primer/clead.html> for leadership of the 105th Congress.

See <http://voter96.cqalert.com> for background stories on legislation, analysis of major issues, voting records, and election results.

The Presidency:

See <http://www.whitehouse.gov> for the home page of the White House.

See <http://www.tamu.edu/whitehouse/> for documents and other academic resources concerning the presidency.

See <http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/Welcome.html> for the best all-around introduction to various types of government information on policy issues.

See <http://www.gpo.ucop.edu/search/budget97.html> for the budget.

The Bureaucracy:

See <http://www.fedworld.gov> for links to numerous federal agencies and other government information.

The Courts:

See <http://www.uscourts.gov> for information about the federal courts.

See <http://lawlib.wuacc.edu/washlaw/searchlaw.html> for information and decisions at the state court level.

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A number of individuals have helped to make this book a reality. First, we owe an enormous intellectual debt to numerous scholars who, over the past two decades, have contributed greatly to our own intellectual development. Among these are (alphabetically): James Anderson, Ann O'M. Bowman, Charles Bullock, Richard Cole, Peter DeLeon, William Dunn, Malcolm Goggin, David Hedge, Richard Hofferbert, Helen Ingram, Hank Jenkins-Smith, Michael Kraft, Dean Mann, Peter May, Daniel Mazmanian, Paula McClain, Kenneth Meier, Henry Nau, Walter Rosenbaum, Paul Sabatier, Anne L. Schneider, Robert Stoker, Harvey Tucker, Richard Waterman, and David Webber, among others. By their prolific writings, and often their willingness to provide constructive comments on our work, they have contributed in a very direct way to whatever success this book enjoys. We are very grateful for their help. Second, several external reviewers or adopters of this book offered their constructive criticisms and advice on the first or second editions, including Les Alm, Brian Cook, Charles Davis, Malcolm Goggin, Jeffrey Greene, Bernie Kolasa, John Piskulich, James Sheffield, Andrew Skalaban, and James Wunsch. We adopted many of their suggestions, and the book is much improved as a consequence. We extend our sincere thanks to all of them for their helpful advice.

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James P. Lester and Joseph Stewart, Jr.

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