P01 / Policy Behaviour: Definitions, Methods and a Research Agenda

Topic : OTHER

Chair : Ching Leong (National University of Singapore)

Second Chair : Michael Howlett (Simon Fraser University)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

In what has been termed as the 'behavioural turn' in the policy sciences (Leong & Howlett, 2020), policy research has shifted from the traditional emphasis on models of hedonic compliance-deterrence, to a behaviour-driven approach that foregoes the assumption that all behaviour is rational and utilitarian. The question is: What is being done by whom to facilitate this transition and push the behavioural turn forward? This proposed panel aims to address this question by examining fundamental questions about what constitutes "policy behaviour", who is examining it, the extenuating factors that should be examined around issues such as compliance, what innovations in methodology have developed (such as behavioural policy experiments), and on what subject are more behavioural policy studies are needed in this area. This panel seeks papers which will contribute to empirical base and the improved theorizing of the implications of the behavioural turn for policy-making and the nature of the behavioural state.

Rationale:

In what has been termed as the 'behavioural turn' in the policy sciences (Leong & Howlett, 2020; Howlett & Leong, 2022), policy research has shifted from the traditional emphasis on models of hedonic compliance-deterrence, to a behaviour-driven approach that foregoes the assumption that all behaviour is rational and utilitarian.

This new approach emphasizes the understanding of the policy relevant behaviour actually evidenced by the targets of policy activity, and by policy-makers rather than assuming them ex ante. More importantly, this movement helps to resolve the paradox formerly characteristic of the field and strikes a new path towards behaviourally-inspired policy design and the development of what might be termed the 'behavioural state,' that is, one in which securing compliance from the target policy population is informed by careful empirical research into the actual motivations of policy targets, rather than a priori assumptions of 'rationality' and utilitarian calculus (Leong & Howlett, 2020).

A behavioural approach has important implications for policy design and practice. For example, it necessitates the acceptance of a greater level of uncertainty about the likelihood of success of policy design at the same time that it broadens the understanding of compliance, for example, from a purely utilitarian model to allow for the influence of informal institutions such as social norms, irrationalities, and the use of new tools such as nudges (Oliver 2017). The use of policy pilots and experiments, for example, emerge as key techniques for policy formulation in this approach. With the rise of technological abilities, the question of whether governments ought to undertake certain interventions have also given rise to issues of morality of public actions.

At the same time, although not situated squarely within this field of behavioural studies, there has been an emerging thread of research on the agnotology of policy studies – ie what policy makers and policy targets do not know – either through wilful ignorance or the active malice of key actors and the behavioural aspects of this issue have only just begun to be examined (Hannah et al, 2022).

These implications of the behavioural turn in the policy sciences remains to be systematically studied further and crystallized. The question is: What is being done, by who, to facilitate this transition and push the behavioural turn forward?

A more unified approach to the study of behaviour in the policy field will aid the increasing numbers in the policy sciences who are starting to embrace behavioural research in planning and designing their policy research. The ultimate objective is to develop policy strategies that are sound in theory and robust in practice (Ewert and Loer 2021).

Panel will deal with all these questions, and papers on these topics are encouraged including:

• Charting the development of the field and theories about behavioural public policy (Oliver 2017; Leong and Howlett 2020);

•Those related to the development and spread of behavioural insight labs (Muhkerjee and Giest 2020;

Straßheim 2021);

• Empirical experiments and implications for practice (Mosely and Thomann 2020)

• Country cases (Ball 2022; Lourenco et al 2016);

• Ethical issues and implications of public philosophy (Sunstein, 2016; Sugden, 2018; Rizzo & Whitman, 2020; von Mises 1927/2005).

This panel will address these questions by collating ideas and promoting discussions on this issue. From the extenuating factors that should be examined, to the ways in which more behavioural policy studies can be encouraged, the panel will contribute to the improved theorizing of the implications of this behavioural turn for the policy-making nature of the state, as well as its extent and nature (Olejniczak et al 2019).

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CALL FOR PAPERS

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the targets of policy activity, and by policy-makers rather than assuming them ex ante. More importantly, this movement helps to resolve the paradox formerly characteristic of the field and strikes a new path towards behaviourally-inspired policy design and the development of what might be termed the ‘behavioural state,’ that is, one in which securing compliance from the target policy population is informed by careful empirical research into the actual motivations of policy targets, rather than a priori assumptions of ‘rationality’ and utilitarian calculus (Leong & Howlett, 2020).

A behavioural approach, however, has important implications for policy design and practice. For example, it necessitates the acceptance of a greater level of uncertainty about the likelihood of success of policy design at the same time that it broadens the understanding of compliance, for example, from a purely utilitarian model to allow for the influence of informal

institutions such as social norms, irrationalities, and the use of new tools such as nudges (Oliver 2017). The use of policy pilots and experiments, for example, emerge as key techniques for policy formulation in this approach. With the rise of technological abilities, the question of whether governments ought to undertake certain interventions have also given rise to issues of morality of public actions.

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The Panel will deal with all these questions, and papers on these topics are encouraged including those related to the development and spread of behavioural insight labs (Muhkerjee and Giest 2020; Straßheim 2021); country cases (Ball 2022; Lourenco et al 2016); and implications for practice (Mosely and Thomann 2020) among others. This panel will address these question by collating ideas and promoting discussions on this issue. From the extenuating factors that should be examined, to the ways in which more behavioural policy studies can be encouraged, the panel will contribute to the improved theorizing of the implications of this behavioural turn for the policy-making nature of the state, as well as its extent and nature (Olejniczak et al 2019).

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Session 1

Thursday, June 29th 08:00 to 10:00 (POD367)

(Virtual) Behavioral public policy design: Nudging to reduce credentialism in Taiwan

Yi-Hua Lai (Soochow University)

Credentialism can be defined as “an ideology of pursuing credential, instead of education”. The phenomenon has existed in many countries, including the US, the UK, France, Russia, Japan, India, Taiwan etc., and resulted in most of the contemporary educational problems. In Taiwan, the Ministry of Education has proposed a variety of policy instruments for solving credentialism, while the effects are limited. Policy instruments and design are mainly based on politics, economics, and sociology, while lack the scope of psychology. The field of behavioral economics has made significant advances in recent years in understanding how people make decisions. As credentialism refers to the mechanism of human mind, behavioral public policies could be one of the solutions. The aim of this study is to design policy instruments based on behavioral economics to deal with the problems of credentialism in Taiwan.

Based on behavioral public policy design, the author developed a “nudge-based report card”, which contains not only scores and rankings but also the individual’s information of aptitude and interest tests. Since career guidance are conducted in schools only at the beginning and end of schooling, and students are immersed in credentialism surroundings in daily lives. Students usually have the problem of “confirmation bias”, thus would tend to choose university and major field based on credentialism, instead of their own interests. The purpose of the instrument is to nudge people taking their aptitude and interest into consideration when making decision of their university and major field choice.

The effectiveness of the instrument was examined by experiment. The authors chose a university in Taiwan as the context, developed an on-line game to employ the nudge-based report card, and conducted interviews embedded within the experiment. Results show that this nudge-based intervention had a positive impact on reducing credentialism, while also appearing to have various effects among subgroups. Evidence suggests that customizing the design and evaluation of a nudge is the best way to strengthen and assess its impact on targeted behavior.

Keywords: behavioral economics, behavioral public policy, policy design, nudge, credentialism, education policy

(Virtual) Promoting residential photovoltaic adoption with prosocial and self-interest nudges: evidence from a field experiment

Oliver Neumann (University of Lausanne)

The use of photovoltaic (PV) systems on residential buildings is a key element in the societal transition to renewable energies. However, despite economic and ecological benefits, many homeowners struggle to adopt PV due to technical complexity, administrative burden, and cognitive biases such as inertia. There also is a lack of research on this issue and on how interventions informed by behavioral science could help increase adoption. We address this gap in the literature by conducting a preregistered field experiment involving 600 homeowners in Switzerland, testing whether two types of personalized behavioral interventions, one based on prosocial motives and one focusing on self-interest, lead to tangible actions towards PV adoption. Our results show that both interventions substantially increase adoption behavior compared to a control group and a group that received only general information on PV. The intervention focusing on self-interest, which highlighted homeowners’ missed revenues in the past year and thereby invoked loss aversion, yielded the largest effect (over 15% of this group took behavioral steps towards adoption after being contacted). In sum, our study contributes to a better understanding of how public

organizations can use behavioral interventions to promote renewables without large subsidies.

Note: I am unable to get all my co-authors to register for an account before the deadline and simply putting in their names does not work. The authors are: Oliver Neumann, Audrey Gonin (both University of Lausanne), Maurus Pfalzgraf, and Anthony Patt (both ETH Zurich). They will register in case of acceptance. I hope you understand.

Stronger policy measures facilitating the policy implementation of physical distancing? A survey experiment in Taipei, Tokyo, Singapore, and Seoul

Lili Li (Auburn University)

Araz Taeihagh (National University of Singapore)

Physical distancing is a critical strategy for managing the COVID-19 pandemic. To implement physical distancing for controlling COVID-19 transmission, governments have taken various measures to encourage physical distancing among citizens. Some governments tend to apply strong authority measures to enforce physical distancing, some prefer symbolic and hortatory measures, and others like to adopt packages of authority, symbolic and hortatory, and incentive measures. According to Scheider and Ingram (1990), who classified policy measures based on the individual motivation criterion, authority measures are those supported by the legitimate authority of the government. Incentive measures encourage preferable behaviours by offering tangible payoffs, either positive payoffs (e.g., grants) or negative payoffs (e.g., penalties). Symbolic and hortatory instruments induce policy-preferred actions by capitalizing on decision heuristics and cultivating people's intrinsic motivation, such as public information campaigns. Scheider and Ingram (1990) considered policy measures as means to overcome impediments for people to take actions necessary to solve social, economic, or political problems. A specific type of policy measure, e.g., an authority measure, may show varying degrees of effectiveness in different countries due to variations in contexts. Currently, the effectiveness of different types of implementation measures for maintaining physical distancing is understudied. How is the effectiveness of authority measures or their packages with symbolic, hortatory, and incentive measures on motivating physical distancing behaviours? How does effectiveness vary with policy contexts? To answer this question, this research conducted a cross-city survey experiment in Taipei, Tokyo, Singapore, and Seoul, with 1200 respondents in each city. Data analysis found that people in Taipei and Singapore exhibited more frequent physical distancing behaviours, e.g., wearing masks outside the home and avoiding social gatherings. Female and older populations were more likely to maintain frequent physical distancing behaviours. Experimental results showed that a combination of authority and incentive measures significantly increased the frequency of physical distancing behaviours. Through the survey experiment, this research contributes to the policy design and implementation literature by providing experimental evidence on the implementation effectiveness of different types of policy measures/packages. It also provides a comparative perspective on how policy effectiveness varies across different cities, offering practical implications on the choice of policy measures in future pandemic crises in diverse policy contexts.

Keywords: physical distancing, policy implementation, policy measure, authority measure, survey experiment

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Session 2Session 2

Thursday, June 29th 10:20 to 12:20 (POD367)

Negative Spillovers from Real-time Feedback for Water Conservation

Swee Kiat Tay (LKY School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore)

Joost Buurman (Institute of Water Policy, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, NUS)

Showering is one of the most water-intensive behaviours in urban households, accounting for 20-30% of water use. Real-time feedback from smart devices have been proven to reduce water consumption in showers significantly, but it is not known whether these devices have spillover effects on other water use behaviours. For the first time, we provide empirical evidence for a significant and negative within-domain spillover effect from the use of such devices, showing an increase of water use in other activities by 2.5% per day per household. As high as one-third of conservation effects are eroded by such spillovers. Overall, however, net water use is still reduced by 4.7% in the 385 households that were observed. This study points out an important behavioural limit on the use of such smart shower devices and suggest that such use be accompanied by informational or other campaigns so as to reduce the large negative spillovers.

Towards a Theory of Policy Bubbles

Moshe Maor (Reichman University)

For a long time, policy evaluation scholars paid much attention to the value of the policy at one point in time, neglecting the development of policy over time, especially its contribution relative to its goals. On the other hand, the policy process literature has focused on policy development over time. Yet, it has stopped short of explaining the extent of over- and underinvestment in the policy relative to its goals. During most of the twentieth century and early twentieth-first century, the heyday of the policy process research in terms of global outreach, the efficiency of policymakers in matching the intensity of the policy tool to the intensity of problems over the long run resided outside the purview of dominant policy process theories. A notable exception is the development of the concept of *policy bubbles* (Jones et al. 2014; Maor 2014) and its theoretical extensions, namely negative policy bubbles (Maor 2016) and the interaction between policy bubbles (Maor 2020). My starting point in this paper is the finding of the punctuated equilibrium theory that policy responses oscillate between periods of underreaction to the flow of information coming from the environment into the system and overreaction due to disproportionate information processing (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). This finding implies that policy overreaction is frequent and that policy bubbles are everywhere. I use this insight to develop a descriptive framework for a theory of policy bubbles. This framework comprises internal variables to a decision maker (e.g., cognitive biases and emotions); institutional constraints (e.g., setting aside a fixed amount of budget to address a dynamic policy problem); unilateral strategic action (e.g., sheer use of violence), and strategic action via mutual reinforcement between policy overproduction and constitutional capture, technological capture, or cultural capture. I analytically examine the interrelations between these core conceptual elements, focusing especially on the interrelations between decision confidence and observable policy decision measures, such as evidence discriminability, choice, and accuracy. These interrelationships specify necessary manifestations of policy decision overconfidence in terms of externally quantifiable variables that can be empirically tested. The goal here is to lay the foundations for a theory of policy bubbles and for a methodologically rigorous treatment of policy decision overconfidence that can lead to a common framework for understanding policy bubbles across different policy domains. The argument advanced here is that the policy bubble conceptualization should be treated as part and parcel of the line of research we know so well (i.e., multiple streams, punctuated equilibrium, advocacy coalitions, and policy feedback).

(Virtual) Toward a research agenda for human-derived biological materials

Kelly Holloway (University of Toronto)

Quinn Grundy (University of Toronto)

Over the past 20 years, plasma has become a lifesaving medical treatment. The World Health Organization (WHO) has underlined the importance of Plasma Derived Medicinal Products (PDMPs) for global health care, including a number of PDMPs on the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines. The PDMP in highest demand is Immune globulin (Ig) and its uses have expanded significantly in recent years for many indications, for immunodeficient patients or as immunomodulatory therapy for people living with autoimmune and alloimmune disorders. The market worth of Ig has gone from $4.8 billion in 1996 to $26.6 billion in 2020 (Hotchko prez 2022 IFPA MRB).

The process of collecting plasma from a donor, manufacturing plasma derived treatments, and distributing those treatments globally requires the coordination of multiple social actors, but has received little attention in the public policy literature. This perspective is necessary as these treatments gain prominence, and continue have a meaningful impact on patients' lives. Policies that determine how to collect, distribute, fund and disseminate these therapies globally must be examined to determine which actors shape policymaking in this field, under what conditions, and in whose interests.

This paper will introduce a research program that can examine the social relations involved in the production and distribution of human-derived medicines. We build on the behavioral turn in the policy sciences to identify relevant policy questions emerging from this field and offer analytic and methodological tools to investigate how different social actors in this space make meaning of plasma as a gift that is free of remuneration, as biological material for treatment, or as raw material for the commercial manufacture of PDMPs.

There has been some relevant theoretical work mapping the relationship between the blood collection agency, the donor, and the recipient, understanding how risk factors into public health decisions and the management of human biological materials (Farrell 2012). We build on work by Busby and colleagues (2013) that examines how the production, supply, and deployment of blood is socially mediated. This is bound up with a blood economy where the need to protect public health is balanced with industry, professional, public, and patient concerns—a dynamic that deserves further examination (Busby et al 2013).

Importantly, this policy terrain spans jurisdictions and includes national blood services, commercial manufacturers, multi-level regulatory agencies and governments. A research program for human-derived biological materials must attend to the multiple dimensions to policymaking involving risk, trust, public provision of healthcare and regulation of medical products. Further, a behaviorally-oriented research agenda requires an understanding of the perceptions, decisions, and actions of various social actors in this policy field including plasma donors, recipients of plasma products, and clinicians that prescribe the products. Thus we have a dual aim, to develop a research program, and to further theorize the importance of the behavioural turn in policy sciences.