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There is a fine borderline between on the one hand, the investment of political capital and the use of rhetoric in persuading the public of the necessity and desirability of policies—in rallying support and making them acceptable, in other words—and on the other hand, manipulative cynicism in their presentation. We praise the former as political leadership—only consider Churchill's use of rhetoric in rallying the British people in the dark days of 1940 or Roosevelt's defense of the Lend-Lease policy—while condemning the latter. Modeling governments as prudential, self-regarding actors does not, therefore, capture the complexity of the real world of public policy. It leaves unexplained, for example, why governments take policy decisions that will only benefit their successors. It also creates a puzzle: why do governments address moral or ethical issues which at best are neutral in their impact on voting behavior or at worst may turn out to be stirring up an angry hornet's nest of opposition?

The case of pension policy in the opening years of the twenty-first century illustrates the first point. Across most OECD countries governments were anxiously addressing the problem of aging populations and the expected (and often exaggerated) burden of meeting the consequent pensions' bill. In doing so, they were looking twenty and more years ahead. Why did they do so when, on the face of it, they had little to gain by such a strategy? After all, no government in office in 2000 would have to answer to the electorate of 2030. One reason may of course be that they were using the future as a pretext for pursuing present reform proposals (such as further pension privatization) which otherwise might be regarded as unacceptable.[3] Ideology is there for sure but so is serving their friends in the finance community. This is a fully defensible interpretation of the Bush administration's embrace of social security pension reform as required by the feared insolvency that population aging foreshadows. The argumentative structure and rhetoric is familiar: actuarial forecasts project increasing pension claims and assuming no change in benefits or contributions, "bankruptcy" at some future date is a mathematical certainty. The fact that "trust fund" language originally was meant to communicate political commitment is lost. Instead, the analogy to private trust funds which can go broke, becomes a contemporary source of public fearfulness (Marmor 2004).

However, even conceding this explanation, invoking the interests of yet to be born voters can be seen (like hypocrisy) as the tribute paid by vice to virtue. Governments rightly presume that they are expected to take a long-term view and the fact that policy makers feel obliged to invoke this justification for their policies illustrates the extent to which public policy is shaped by such normative considerations. Which is not to argue, of course, that governments invariably (or even usually) examine the long-term implications of their policies: witness, for example, the problem of nuclear

especially vulnerable to the claim that they had not been legitimized by broad public discussion and understanding.

[3] There is no question that President Bush was hesitant about direct criticism of the US social insurance pension programs. The use of spectres of an aging America was a vehicle for prompting present adjustments in the name of necessity. The change he proposed   using social insurance contributions for investments in individual risk bearing accounts   was deeply controversial within the policy analytic community, but amplified rather than ridiculed by the media.

waste that will remain radioactive for generations. Rhetorical long-sightedness can sit alongside policy myopia.

Again, the self-image of policy actors—who want to be seen to be following certain ideal types of behavior—seems to be at least as important as their narrow self-interest when it comes to ethical and moral issues. Only consider President Clinton's ill-fated decision at the very outset of his presidency about how to treat homosexuality in the American armed services. In February 1993, his very first presidential decision on defense matters was to propose that the US military change its long-standing objections to having homosexuals in the services. The presidential suggestion provoked sharp criticism within the military, enthusiastic support from the organized homosexual community, and derision among the chattering classes for its timing, content, and presumed insensitivity to military norms. In terms of self-seeking political behavior this made no sense, as quickly became apparent. But it did make sense in terms of the president's sense of what was right and appropriate in terms of his self-image as a progressive liberal. (It also made Clinton the recipient of substantial financial support from the gay community, which is comparatively rich, ready to spend, and politically active.[4])

The same point could be made about many other governmental "policy outputs." In the case of the UK, for example, successive governments have resisted attempts to restore capital punishment, even though survey evidence suggests that bringing back the hangman would earn them applause from a majority of the population and the tabloids. However, not only would such a move bring them condemnation from the liberal establishment and the broadsheets. But for many legislators opposition to the death penalty is a core value which they are prepared to put before majoritarianism. The 2003 controversy over the religious symbolism of attire in French schools—with the state forbidding the wearing of headscarves—obviously involved ideals of secular republicanism as well as prejudice against Islamic fundamentalism. In short, policy actors have moral constituencies, as well as constituencies of material interest, and follow moral imperatives. It is not unknown for policy actors to congratulate themselves on pursuing unpopular policies for what they consider right. Invoking considerations of moral rectitude earns points in this world as well as (possibly) the next. And any convincing analysis of their assumptive worlds must take this into account.

2. The Policy Portfolio

Analyzing the genesis, development, and implementation of individual policies is misleading to the extent that it misses out on an important characteristic of public

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[4] The Clinton suggestion ended up with what came to be known as the "don't ask, don't tell" policy. While not what President Clinton called for, this operational policy has no doubt changed military norms substantially.

policy making. This is that demands for public action tend to exceed any government's capacity to supply policy responses. The portfolio of policies that eventually emerges therefore is the product of a complex process of bargaining, negotiation, and political calculation. On the one hand, there is competition between and among interest groups and departments pressing for action on their concerns. Governments are not unitary actors, although for convenience we refer to them as a collectivity in the text (Allison 1971; Allison and Zelikow 1999). Cabinet ministers with different and sometimes conflicting priorities jostle for space in the legislative program. On the one hand, there are judgements about where the investment of administrative capacity and political capital will yield the largest returns—judgements which are filtered through the lenses of the "mental models" of the policy actors whose interests will be affected. In short, the launch of a policy may reflect as much the desire to have a "balanced portfolio" (whether in terms of maintaining the legitimacy of the government or in terms of political expediency) as factors intrinsic to the specific policy arena.

The heterogeneity of such a policy portfolio is illustrated by both the British data in Appendix 44.1 and the American counterpart in Appendix 44.2. The first summarizes the Queen's speech delivered to the UK Parliament in November 2003, outlining the British government's legislative program for the next year. The US example summarizes the State of the Union speech given by President Bush to the Congress in January 2004. Both examples should be seen as illustrative, not representative. The contents of these two speeches are time specific. Under different governments, at different stages in the life-cycle of any administration and in a different global environment, they could have been very different. Our concern here, however, is not so much with the details of the policies involved—which are only discussed to the extent that they need to be comprehensible to the reader—but with the overall style and shape of such policy portfolios at one particular historical moment.

Even the long laundry list that is the 2003 Queen's speech greatly understates the extent and variety of British public policy "outputs" in any given year. Most importantly, it excludes fiscal policies: decisions by the Chancellor of the Exchequer about the level of spending on specific programs and the design of the system of taxes and benefits. And it cannot include, by definition, government policies—whether administrative, legislative, or judicial—prompted by the outbreak of an epidemic, a natural disaster, or an external threat.

Immediately striking is the prominence in this particular portfolio of what might be called social stability concerns. These included: tightening up the appeal system in asylum cases, working towards the introduction of national identity cards, and modernizing the law and system for protecting women and children. All three examples can be understood as public policy in the responsive mode, reacting to external events and perhaps even more importantly, to public perceptions of those events. The tightening up of the appeals system and the incremental development of identity cards can both be seen as part of a strategy for reassuring the public that the government was acting to stop the UK from being flooded by fraudulent asylum seekers and illegal

immigrants. These were concerns with high political salience that had attracted much attention in the media in the UK, as in many other European countries. The improvement of services for protecting children was again a response to an issue with a high public and media profile: a series of appalling cases of child abuse had revealed great shortcomings in the existing system of surveillance and protection.

All three examples also, however, underline the importance of distinguishing between *why* a particular issue makes it onto the agenda for action and *how* it is then translated into a specific public policy measure. In all three cases, the government's decision to respond to public worries could be interpreted either as (three cheers) a demonstration of its sensitivity to public concerns or (boos) as a cynical political maneuver designed to prevent the opposition from exploiting these issues. But all three cases had long histories. The UK system for processing asylum seekers had long been recognized as a shambles (not least because of the hardships inflicted on genuine cases). What is more, previous attempts to improve it had produced meager results. The introduction of identity cards had been debated since at least the 1960s, though the debate was given new impetus after 2000 by both developments in technology and increasing concern (whether justified or not) about illegal immigration. Child protection had been an ongoing worry, with recurring scandals despite a succession of attempts to improve the system, for at least as long. As this historical example shows, a raised sensitivity to public concerns (or pejoratively, political expediency) opened the window for the various government agencies who had long been working on these problems to get their ideas onto the agenda for action (Kingdon 1995). The specific measures that eventually emerged reflect as much bureaucratic bargaining and negotiation, organizational routines, and notions of administrative feasibility, as political-electoral considerations. The factors that influence the timing of public policy do not necessarily determine the contents.

There are some other points to note about this particular British policy portfolio. First, little of the proposed legislation involved classic pressure group activity. Like the three examples already discussed, most of the initiatives represented a response to diffuse public concerns rather than to demands from organized interest groups (though in the case of pension reform the government was involved in tough negotiations with employers, the insurance industry, and the trade unions when it came to the details of the legislation). Second, much of it represented the incremental processes of government rather than policy innovation: for example, the proposals to make the planning system faster and to improve traffic flows—a reminder that public policy is as much drudgery as drama, a constant process of tinkering and repairing. The small print of public policy (we all care about traffic flows) matters if governments want to demonstrate their competence in dealing with the day-to-day concerns of their citizens. Most of public policy is as boring as darning old socks. Third, policy may represent a moral commitment, which has little or nothing to do with political expediency. The proposed legislation to allow the registration of civil partnerships between same-sex couples is a case in point. This was symbolism not as a substitute for action but as a signal that the government's heart was in the right place: that it was a liberal, progressive administration. In this sense, it was an

important part of a balanced portfolio, a rebuttal of the charges of authoritarianism prompted by some of the Blair government's law and order policies.

Quite different in kind was one of the most contentious measures in the 2004 Queen's speech: reform of the House of Lords. Here the fissures were as much within the governing Labour Party as between the Labour Party and the Conservative opposition. In the case of the House of Lords, there was cross-party agreement that the hereditary element should be eliminated. But divisions existed within all parties about how the new composition of the second chamber should be determined, whether by election or nomination: a series of votes in the House of Commons on various options had failed to produce a consensus about the composition. This, then, can be seen as an example of a government being able to exploit confusion and disagreement to impose its own preferred option: a second chamber appointed by an independent commission, its party composition reflecting voting patterns. It was an unusual and rare form of public policy making worth noting, however, for demonstrating the difficulty of classifying and anatomizing the variety of activities that go under that label.

The State of the Union speech, given 20 January 2004, set out President Bush's legislative aims for 2004 and beyond. The contents of the list range from announcing broad policy aims to proposing legislative action: It is the breadth of the range—and the loose connection to likely legislative action—that most sharply distinguishes the American practice from that of parliamentary leaders like Blair.

Yet, the similarities of the two forms are striking. The Bush speech offered to its audience just the kind of "balanced portfolio" presented to the Commons. In other words, within the heterogeneous legislative proposals and public policy concerns there were a parallel mix of appeals. For example, all of the funding proposals were incremental, with flourishes about "doubling" efforts to encourage sexual abstinence and to make the world safer for democracy, free markets, and free speech. Evident as well were the responses to what we have characterized as diffuse concerns about social stability. So, we find aspirational gestures towards such difficult subjects as how to control medical inflation with policies as weakly connected to the purpose as tax subsidies for catastrophic plans. Likewise, there was top billing for concerns about terrorism, however uncertain the connection between means and ends. And finally, the speech appealed for support of two very controversial legislative actions: the re-enactment of the Patriot Act (and its attendant conflict with civil liberties) as well as the proposal for a temporary workers program (which excites the ire of the labor movement). Very few of the American proposals looked like simple responses to classic pressure group demands. Or put another way, the language suggested responsiveness to diffuse rather than concentrated organizational concerns.

Institutional structures and the policy context of the moment explain much of the remaining differences between our two illustrations. The most obvious feature of the Bush laundry list is its aspirational character, not its predictive accuracy. In the US system of government, the general rule is that administration proposes, but the Congress disposes. And what the Congress does is not usually decided by general elections, as it is in parliamentary regimes. There is no necessary policy majority in

the Congress even when controlled by one party, as it was in 2004. As a result, no one could have said with any certainty in January of 2004 whether any of the actions President Bush proposed would become law that year. In the event, the worsening circumstances in Iraq during the spring and summer of 2004 rendered the president's influence in the Congress less decisive. The electoral context increasingly made the Democrats unwilling to cooperate and fissures within the Republican congressional majority made legislative majorities harder to construct.

This brings us back to the most general conclusion of this section: namely, that it is very difficult to classify (or anatomize) public policy. What counts as an issue, or what similar "issues" evoke, depends, as we have argued, on context, which in turn is filtered through the mental models of actors and audiences. So, for instance, the salience of immigration reform in the UK is not reflected in the modest reference by the Bush administration to a temporary worker program. In 2004, immigration had priority on the policy agendas of the EU generally, reflecting domestic conflict over amnesty programs, EU worker mobility policies, and claims of foreigner "misuse" of welfare state programs. Nothing of that kind is evident in the US document, and the reason is largely institutional rather than ideological. American federalism shapes welfare state disputes in the USA so that conflicts over access to medical care programs (like Medicaid) or educational expenses of newcomers (local and state funding issues) are channeled away from national debates. The same range of sentiments that excited debate in the UK during the first years of the twenty-first century did appear in the USA, but not during those years, on the national agenda. California enacted measures limiting the access to social programs by foreign, largely Mexican workers; Texas confronted cross-border concerns in state legislation. And at the national level, the federal Immigration and Naturalization Service increasingly used helicopters to interdict workers crossing deserts and rivers to enter the south-west. But the "face" of immigration policy looked different across the Atlantic, which illustrates our classificatory caution.

3. The Historical Dimension

Much is made in the literature of path dependency, variously defined. At one level this is simply another way of describing the incremental, adaptive nature of much policy making: that (as we have seen in our case study) public policy consists to a large extent of patching and repairing, building on and learning from experience (Heclo 1974). Again, the fact that policy makers faced with a new problem tend to draw on an established repertory of tools reinforces the bias of public policy against radical innovation, as does dependence on existing organizations for delivery. Initial policy reactions to AIDS were a case in point (Fox, Day, and Klein 1989). More narrowly and rigorously, path dependency is seen as flowing from the structure of

interests created by policy (Tuohy 1999; Hacker 2002). Decisions taken at point A in time entrench—sometimes indeed create—interests that come to constrain decisions at point B. Either way, what is interesting and appears to call for explanation is the rare occasion when public policy takes a new turn, whether successfully or not, rather than the sock-darning dimension of public policy.

So history matters. But we would suggest, it matters in a more profound sense still. Not only are policy makers obliged to work within the context of inherited institutions—constitutional arrangements and conventions and the administrative machinery of government—as well as the structure of interests created by previous policies, as noted. But their world of ideas is also the product of history. This is so in a double sense. On the one hand, their notions are likely to be shaped by early experience and the culture of their time, as with all of us. On the other hand, they are likely to use history (or rather their own interpretation of it) as a quarry for policy exemplars or warnings.

From this wider perspective, history can be used to explain change and divergence from existing paths as well as continuity. Consider, for example, the generation of politicians who grew to maturity in the years of slump and mass unemployment of the 1920s and 1930s. The experience persuaded even those in the middle of the political spectrum (Roosevelt in the USA; Macmillan in the UK) to adopt radical social and economic policies. And to underline the importance of ideas, they could draw on Keynesian theory to justify their policies. In short, there was not only a change in what was considered politically important but also in what was considered to be possible in practice. The converse applies to the next generation, who grew up in a period of unprecedented economic growth and full employment. They proved, when in power, less sensitive to unemployment statistics. And again, they could turn for justification to the new economic paradigm (Hall 1993) which challenged Keynesian notions by arguing that there was a natural rate of unemployment about which governments could do little and only at the risk of fueling inflation.

What matters in all this, of course, is not history as written in academic textbooks but the interpretations put on it by policy makers: the lessons they choose to draw from the past (Neustadt and May 1988). So, for example, the nebulous Third Way as espoused by Clinton and Blair in the 1990s—the latest in a long line of attempts to find a middle way (Macmillan 1938)—cannot be understood without taking into account their diagnosis of the mistakes made by their predecessors as party leaders. The interpretation of history need not be correct. Some disastrous policy decisions have flown from the misapplication of supposed historical lessons, largely as a result of mis-specifying the similarity between past and present situations. The conclusion that it never pays to appease dictators drawn from the abject surrender of the Western powers to Hitler at Munich in 1938, plus the equation of Nasser with Hitler, was used to justify Britain's disastrous Suez adventure in 1956. And Bush's initiation of the 2003 Iraq War may also, in part at least, have reflected a misreading of history. Bush's Iraq policy appeared to some a reaction against his father's "failure" to topple Saddam. Whatever the president's motives, the justifications offered—that weapons of mass destruction in the hands of a dictator

will be used and therefore must be "taken out" preventively—relied on historical claims. In another sense, the Iraq policy was an earlier conviction searching for an occasion, a commitment to get rid of Saddam by officials from Bush I's presidency acted upon in Bush II's administration (Woodward 2002, 2004; Dean 2004).

Particular readings of history may also persuade policy makers to diverge from the trodden path. Policy change is not only the result of windows of opportunity suddenly opening as the result of some upheaval in the economic or political environment. Policy change itself may open such windows by demonstrating that the previously unthinkable has become doable. A case in point is the repudiation in the 1980s by Mrs Thatcher of the assumption shaping the policies of all post-1945 British governments that they needed the cooperation of the trade union movement to manage the economy. Instead, she was prepared to confront and fight the unions (Young 1989). The skies did not fall in. And Tony Blair, as Labour Prime Minister, shaped his policies accordingly, largely sidelining the unions when he took office in 1997 and making a political virtue of his independence of them.

The Bush II 2004 administration's approach to old-age and retirement policy illustrated similar risk taking. By suggesting that what Americans call social security retirement pensions should be partially privatized, President Bush repeatedly risked identification as an enemy of a public policy "sacred cow." The cliché has been that "social security is the third rail of American politics, electrocuting all those who touch it." Yet, throughout his administration's first term, Bush called for private, individual pension accounts funded by a proportion of the compulsory "contributions" that all Americans pay. This innovation, the president claimed, was the right response to the fiscal strains the aging American society faces. Leaving aside the merits of this view—which are few if any—this bold rhetoric in presidential speeches and proposals did not provoke the public condemnation pundits anticipated on the basis of social security's status as a supposed "sacred cow." In turn, the rhetoric emboldened the interest groups who would gain financially if the American government required some share of social insurance taxes to be invested in the stock and bond markets. As a result, the presidential election of 2004 was replete with references to the differences between the traditional defense of social insurance (largely by Democrats) and the call for private individual accounts (largely by Republicans).

Innovation occurs, but not as commonly as appeals to its possibility (Baumgartner and Jones 1993, 2002). Nonetheless, without history there can therefore be no understanding of public policy. And without history there can also be no realistic evaluation of public policy. For if evaluation does not take into account what policy makers were trying to achieve, if the criteria used in judging the success or otherwise of policies are those of the evaluator rather than those of the originator, the result will at best yield a very partial, perhaps anachronistic verdict. By this we do not claim a historical monopoly on either the understandings or the evaluation of public policy. But we do connect our insistence on the explanatory importance of the assumptive world of policy actors with the truism that all our assumptions incorporate historical understandings, both biographical and cultural.

4. The Comparative Dimension

This chapter has so far emphasized the importance of context—institutional, ideo-logical, and historical—in the understanding of policy making in modern polities. Here we turn to another important way to understand and to evaluate policy making: namely, the use of cross-national policy studies. There is little doubt such work has mushroomed in recent decades, partly no doubt, because of technological innovations that have speeded up the transfer of information about what is happen-ing abroad. Indeed, none of us can escape the "bombardment of information about what is happening in other countries" (Klein 1995). The pressing question, however, is whether this informational dispersion is a help or a hindrance to understanding what governments do and why.

There are at least three obvious ways in which policy analysis might be improved by cross-national understanding. One is simply to define more clearly what is on the policy agenda by reference to quite similar or quite different formulations elsewhere. The more similar the problems or policy responses, the more likely one can portray the nuanced formulations of any particular country. The more dissimilar, the more striking the contrast with what one takes for granted in one's own policy setting. This is the gift of perspective, which may or may not bring with it explanatory insight or lesson drawing. A second approach is to use cross-national enquiry to check on the adequacy of nation-specific accounts. Let's call that a defense against explanatory provincialism. What precedes policy making in country A includes many things—from legacies of past policy to institutional and temporal features that "seem" decisive. How is one to know how decisive as opposed to simply present? One answer is to look for similar outcomes elsewhere where some of those factors are missing or configured differently. Another is to look for a similar configuration of precedents without a comparable outcome. A third and still different approach is to treat cross-national experience as quasi-experiments. Here one hopes to draw lessons about why some policies seem promising and doable, promising and impossible, or doable but not promising. All of these approaches appear in the comparative literature. And with the growth of such writing, one senses an optimism about the possible improvement of comparative learning and lesson drawing. But is the optimism justified? That question is what interests us here.

The interest, however, is not in addressing the broad topic of the promise and perils of cross-national policy studies (Klein 1991; Marmor, Okma, and Freeman 2005). Rather, it is to offer some illustrations of how comparative understanding can advance the art and craft of policy analysis. This requires some examples of each of these approaches, positive or negative. A useful starting point would be to take a misleading cross-national generalization that upon reflection, helps to clarify differ-ences in how policy problems are in fact posed. A 1995 article on European health reform claimed that "countries everywhere are reforming their health systems." It went on to assert that "what is remarkable about this global movement is that both

the diagnosis of the problems and the prescription for them are virtually the same in all health care systems" (Hunter 1995). These globalist claims, it turns out, were mistaken (Jacobs 1998; Marmor 1999). But the process of specifying exactly what counts as health care problems—whether of cost control, of poor quality, or of fragmented organization of services—is helpful. The comparative approach first refutes the generalization, but it also enriches what any one analyst portrays as national "problems." So, for instance, the British health policy researcher coming to investigate Oregon's experiment in rationing would have soon discovered that it was neither restrictive in practice nor a major cost control remedy in the decade 1990–2000 (Jacobs, Marmor, and Oberlander 1999).

Offering new perspectives on problems and making factual adjustments in national portraits are not to be treated as trivial tasks. They are what apprentice policy craftsmen and -women might well spend a good deal of time perfecting. That is because all too many comparative studies are in fact caricatures rather than characterizations of policies in action. A striking illustration of that problem is the 2000 World Health Organization (WHO) report on how one might rank health systems across the globe. Not only was the ambition itself grandiose, but the execution of it would be best regarded as ridiculous (Williams 2001). The WHO posed five good questions about how health systems work: are they fair, responsive, efficient, and so on. But they answered those questions without the faintest attention to the difficulties of describing responsiveness or fairness or efficiency in some universalistic manner. What's more, they used as partial evidence the distant opinions of Geneva-based medical personnel to "verify" what takes place in Australia, Oman, or Canada. With comparativists like that, one can easily understand why some funders of research regard comparative policy studies as excuses for boondoggles. But mistakes should not drive out the impulse for improvement.[5]

The most commonly cited advantage of comparative studies, however, is as an antidote to explanatory provincialism. Once again, a health policy example provides a good illustration of how and how not to proceed. There are those in North America who regard universal health insurance as incompatible with American values. They rest their case in part on the belief that Canada enacted health insurance and the USA has not because North American values are sharply different. In short, these comparativists attribute a different outcome to a different political culture in the USA. In

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[5] There are, of course, other interpretations of the WHO action, however unreliable the precise evaluations of national performance. One such interpretation, offered by one of the *Handbook*'s editors, is that the ranking of countries on the basis of specious data surely would provoke local political interest in gathering and presenting more reliable data about health across the globe. In the case of Australia for instance, the civil servant in charge of the federal health department did in fact challenge the WHO report; in other capitals outrage did lead to condemnation and the provision of counter evidence. This was certainly one result of the exercise, and there is reason to believe this aim was in the mind of the WHO study director, Murray. One of this chapter's authors confronted Murray in London during the spring of 2001 at a conference with the inaccuracies and absurdities of this ranking. Murray responded by invoking the experience of national income accounts. No one, he said, thought GDP measured income perfectly or did so correctly at the outset. But Murray went on to add, "we would not want to go back on GDP measures, would we?" The notion that producing junk science energizes better science may have some empirical backing, but it is the weakest possible defense of any particular, flawed study.

fact, the values of Canada and the United States, while not identical, are quite similar. Canada's distribution of values is closer to that of the United States than any other modern, rich democracy. Like siblings, differences are there. In fact, the value similarities between British Columbia and Washington state are greater than those between either of those jurisdictions and, say, New Brunswick or New Hampshire along the North American east coast. Similar values are compatible with different outcomes, which in turn draw one's attention to other institutional and strategic factors that distinguish Canadian from American experience with financing health care (Maioni 1998; White 1995). One can imagine multiplying examples of such cautionary lessons, but the important point is simply that the lessons are unavailable from national histories alone.

The third category of work is not so directly relevant to our enquiry. But it is worth noting that drawing lessons from the policy experience of other nations is what supports a good deal of the comparative analysis available. The international organizations have this as part of their rationale. WHO, as noted, is firmly in the business of selling "best practices." The OECD regularly produces extensive, hard to gather, statistical portraits of programs as diverse as disability and pensions, trade flows and the movement of professionals, educational levels, and health expenditures. No one can avoid using these efforts, if only because the task of discovering "the facts" in a number of countries is daunting indeed. But the portraiture that emerges requires its own craft review. Does what Germany spends on spas count as health expenditures under public regulation or should it, as with the United States be categorized differently? The same words do not mean the same things. And different words may denote similar phenomena. For now, it is enough to note that learning about the experience of other nations is a precondition for learning from them. A number of comparative studies fail on the first count and thus necessarily on the second. On the other hand, if one were to look for exemplary instances of cross-national learning, one would turn quite quickly to Japan, Taiwan, and Korea. All have sent first-rate civil servants abroad to find promising models, have worried about the barriers to transplantation, and have when using these apparent models, worked carefully on issues of adaptation, transformation, and implementation.

5. The Case for Eclecticism

One reaction to our chapter may well be to dismiss it as an exercise in trying to have it all ways: eclecticism as a substitute for intellectual rigor. However, we make no apology for this. In practice, no public policy analyst can use all the tools of the trade all the time: a rational choice analyst in the morning, a psycho-biographer in the afternoon, a historian in the evening, and a political theorist in the hours when sleep does not come. However, our contention throughout has been that the attempt to draw on all these disciplines is essential. Trying to understand and explain public