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Dialogue, Debates, and Controversies

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Policy Analysis and Advising Decisionmakers: Don't Forget the Decisionmaker/Client

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ABSTRACT *The field of policy analysis rarely emphasizes the role and importance of the relationship between the policy analyst and those whom they are advising. It is a topic that almost never shows up in the policy journals or in panels at policy conferences. The focus of the field has been on the assumptions, tools, roles and reality of the analyst and little acknowledgement that the analyst is an advisor to the decisionmaker – not actually making the decisions. The current experience involving policy advising has moved the field from one that had been found largely in the US to include experience within other countries focusing on the advising function. As such it illustrates similarities and differences that emerge from diverse political, cultural and organizational settings. This range of policy settings indicates both positive and negative experiences with the advising function. The paper uses the comparative approach to contrast the changes over time and to begin to compare the experiences of parliamentary systems with the US shared powers system.*

Keywords: policy analyst; client decisionmaker; comparative analysis; advising

Introduction

Unlike most academic and research fields, the policy analysis field does not operate as an independent and separate endeavor (Wildavsky 1979). By definition, policy analysis involves a conversation between an analyst and a decisionmaker or a decisionmaking process. From its earliest days in the 1960s as a professional field of practice, that

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conversation has been the form in which advice has been transmitted from someone who is viewed as an expert on a specific topic to someone else who has been charged with making a decision about something related to that topic. The process that emerges from this is one of advising that decisionmaker (usually called the client of the analyst), employing a wide range of information sources derived from multiple methodologies to help decisionmakers exert whatever power, authority or influence is available to them. Thus, at its broadest definition, public policy analysis can be viewed as advice to decisionmakers somewhere in the public sector. While that sector differs across the globe, the relationship between analysts and their clients involves many common processes and issues. While this article draws extensively from the US experience, it attempts to set up a framework that is relevant in other systems.

Despite this interdependency between analysts and clients, the field rarely talks about the role and importance of that conversation and has paid very little attention to that two-way process. It is a topic that almost never shows up in the policy journals or in panels at policy conferences. The focus of the field has been on the assumptions, tools, roles and reality of the analyst and little acknowledgement that the analyst is an *advisor* to the decisionmaker – not actually making the decisions.

The current experience involving policy advising has moved the field from one that had been found largely in the US to include experience within other countries which have focused on the advising function. It illustrates similarities and differences that emerge from diverse political, cultural and organizational settings. This range of policy settings indicate both positive and negative experiences with the advising function. As such, this set of issues is clearly appropriate for discussion in the pages of JCPA. The paper uses the comparative approach to contrast the changes over time and also to compare the experiences of parliamentary systems with the US shared powers system. This paper reviews the role of the client in three policy analysis eras and places that role within the broader history of the policy analysis field.

Difficulty Defining the “Client”

While a broad definition of the relationship between the analyst and a decisionmaker or client does provide a context for the policy analysis function, it is used in many different ways. It is not always clear what it means to be either a “decisionmaker” or a “client” of policy analysis. Is the decisionmaker someone who has authority or influence on a particular policy question? Is the client someone who pays directly or indirectly for the analytic work that is done? Or is the client someone who is affected by the policy decision? Are we talking about an individual decisionmaker or are we also focusing on multiple players who operate within a network or are involved in various decisionmaking processes? All of these possibilities (and others) are likely to arise when one tries to define the recipient of policy advice (Radin 2013). These are issues that need to be explored in the future.

But the field of policy analysis has tended to minimize attention to the role of and changes related to the recipient of advice. The concept of a “client” – if it is used at all – is rarely discussed in much detail. Weimer and Vining do define policy analysis as advice to a client (Weimer and Vining 1992); Geva-May with Wildavsky (1997) emphasized the role of the client; and others deal with the client as a stakeholder. Although the policy analyst function has changed quite dramatically over the years, there is little attention to

the role of the decisionmaker client and its changes and expectations as the field has been modified. While the decisionmaker client often seems to be present in the depiction of the policy analysis process, that role is presented in the form of shadowy figures who are defined – if at all – by players within a bureaucratic organizational structure.

It is time to look at the relationship between the advisor and the decisionmaker and examine how it has changed over the years as the policy analysis function has developed and been modified. It is particularly important to investigate this issue as the policy analysis field has moved from a set of activities mostly limited to the US to a variegated activity with very different behaviors that by the twenty-first century represent international political cultures, structures and expectations. The formal policy analysis field has tended to avoid depicting the role of analysts as advisors even though the top civil servants in most parliamentary systems are usually defined as individuals who give advice to high-level decisionmakers. While the classic parliamentary approach has not emphasized formal analysis tied to research as the basis for the advice, few have picked up the differences between the US shared power system and the Westminster system in this regard.

Although the first book on policy analysis in the US included a chapter entitled “Clients” (Meltsner 1976), subsequent volumes such as the multiple editions of Bardach’s *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis* (Bardach 2009) do not focus on the client role. Instead, attention has been concentrated on the methodologies and theories employed by the analyst, rarely focusing attention on the changes and expectations of those who are being advised.

As a result the normal tensions between the expectations of the analyst and the realities experienced by the decisionmaker have grown and there have been increased gulfs between the two players in the basic advising conversation. Indeed, it is often hard to differentiate between the two roles in the advising process. Analysts forget that they have not been provided with the authority to make decisions and believe that their technical expertise should be the sole basis for decisions. Decisionmakers often feel that analysts do not understand the constraints they experience and thus are present only to help them justify their already determined decisions.

While there are examples of useful relationships between analysts and clients, it does not appear that these examples have informed either participant in the policy conversation. It is useful to illustrate the dimensions of the problems experienced by both groups by looking at the changing context in which this activity takes place and by analyzing the changes in the role of the client by presenting their expectations in three consecutive eras in the US.

Each of these eras illustrates different expectations about the analytical approaches to analysis, the organization of the policy analysis profession, modes of educating individuals in university settings, and whether clients expect their advisors to employ analytical or advocacy approaches to issues. While changes have occurred in these three eras, the field of policy analysis has not replaced any of the past approaches and thus all three approaches are found today.

The Role of the Policy Analyst in History

The field of policy analysis developed as both a field of practice and an academic field in the 1960s. But while it developed as a distinct profession and academic field at that time, the practice of providing policy advice to decisionmakers is really an ancient art. Some

have noted that Machiavelli might have been the first policy analyst in his role as an advisor to the Prince. But there were even earlier expressions of this role across the globe. Few of us know these people but these are individuals who performed the timeless functions of friend, educator, conscience, eyes and ears, executor and advisor to often isolated and lonely rulers (Goldhamer 1978, p. ix).

There are lessons from the past that help us understand the attributes of the policy analysis field that took shape in the early 1960s. One can see the changes that have occurred in the role of the client by presenting them in three consecutive eras. Because policy analysis tended to be a field found almost exclusively in the US during both Eras 1 and 2, one sees that the self-consciousness in the field rarely paid attention to different approaches that were found in other political systems. Era 1 is the creation of the field in the 1960s. Much of the literature that we continue to use stays at this initial era. Era 2 is the expansion of the field to the 1990s. And Era 3 involves globalization and politics today.

The original concept of the client of the policy analyst was an individual who has authority and is usually located at the top rungs of a public organization. Meltsner's (1976) depiction of four types of policy analysts with both political and technical skills did acknowledge different roles played by clients as well as different expectations about the relationship between analyst and client. By the end of the twentieth century, the image of the policy analyst as the advisor to the Prince (as in Machiavelli) was replaced by an image of an individual operating (usually in a public organization) along with other policy analysts in both public and nonpublic organizations.

Era 1

Although advice giving and advice seeking were hardly new, American society had experienced a significant change in the period after World War II. During the Progressive Era and especially during the New Deal, lawyers played a very important role as advisors in the US system.

But in the post-World War II period, social scientists began to play a role in the decisionmaking process. The imperatives of war had stimulated new analytic techniques that sought to apply principles of rationality to strategic decisionmaking.

Yehezkel Dror, one of the earliest advocates for the creation of policy analysis as a new profession, emphasized the reliance on economics (Dror 1971, p. 117).

All of this took form in the components of the Planning, Programing, and Budgeting System (PPBS), a decision allocation process that was established in the Department of Defense (DoD) in 1961 and eventually extended by President Lyndon Johnson to other parts of the federal government.

PPBS itself had antecedents in the work of the RAND Corporation in Santa Monica, California, the nonprofit organization created in 1948, just after World War II was over, to do analytic work for the government, especially the DoD (RAND home page; West 2011). The office that was established in the DoD to carry out McNamara's analytical agenda became the model for future analytic activity throughout the federal government.

In many ways, the establishment of this office represented a top-level strategy to avoid what were viewed as the pitfalls of traditional bureaucratic behavior. Rather than move through a complex chain of command, the analysts in this office – regardless of their rank – had direct access to the top officials in the department. Those individuals became

the clients of the analysts. Their loyalty was to the secretary of the department, the individual at the top of the organization (the Ruler in Machiavelli's formulation) who sought control and efficiencies in running the huge department. In addition to the PPBS system, they introduced a range of analytic methods to the federal government, including cost-benefit analysis, operations and systems research, and linear programming (West 2001).

This office was viewed as an autonomous unit, made up of individuals with well-hewn skills who were not likely to have detailed knowledge of the substance of the policy assignments given them. Their specializations were in the techniques of analysis, not in the details of their application.

Several other patterns emerged that had a dramatic impact on the field. There was an assumption that the policy analysts who were assembled would constitute a small, elite corps, made up of individuals who would be expected to spend only a few years in the federal government. Sometimes called the "Whiz Kids", this staff was highly visible – both its PPBS activity and its general expertise came to the attention of President Lyndon Johnson (Williams 1998).

Even during these days, however, there were those who were skeptical about the fit between the PPBS demands and the developing field of policy analysis. In what has become a classic article, Aaron Wildavsky argued in the *Public Administration Review* in 1969 that the PPBS system had damaged the prospects of encouraging policy analysis in American national government (Wildavsky 1969).

Even before the Bureau of the Budget (BoB) directive to create PPBS systems across the federal government was issued, in 1965 the Office of Economic Opportunity had established a small office that was engaged in the functions of planning and program examination, advice and research management and budget development (Williams 1998). The policy analysis office that was established in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in response to Johnson's directive had clear linkages to the DoD office (Radin 1991).

In an environment overwhelmed by the Viet Nam War, Johnson's expectations about this new function were seen by many to be unrealistic. Trying to balance guns and butter budget goals (domestic policy development in a wartime economy) was difficult enough inside any bureaucracy but found to be more complicated in the US political structure with shared powers between the executive branch and the legislature. The DoD budget developed through the PPBS framework was not only ignored by the Congress but the Congress required the department to develop a traditional budget instead of the PPBS effort.

Despite this, some of the domestic policy departments started to establish their own policy analysis offices and sought to advise their cabinet officials using a range of analytic tools. As Alice Rivlin (2014) remembers it, "Both advocates and evaluators were naïve by today's standards". Arnold Meltsner was one of the few early writers to give sustained attention to questions involving political feasibility and skills in political analysis. His interviews provide a picture of an unfolding process that was much different than the original practitioners expected.

During the early years of the field, there seemed to be an implicit acceptance that policy analysts would be governed by the norms of neutrality and objectivity that were embedded in the analysts' culture (Dror 1984.) It was assumed that these tasks will be accomplished when analysis is clearly separated from the decisionmaking

process. Historically, the policy analysis function was situated squarely in the formulation stage of the policy process – a stage that was viewed as separate from the adoption phase or the implementation phase. The policy analyst was the advisor, not the decisionmaker. Yet there was little self-consciousness about the behaviors that were appropriate to achieve the goals of the advising relationship (Benveniste 1977, p. 20).

The fragmentation of the American political system also provided different opportunities for those who advocate particular positions to raise their concerns. In contrast to the policy formulation stage, both the agenda-setting and adoption stages are essentially political processes, and political reasoning and argument predominate. Each of these stages defines a client (or clients) and each of these clients has a particular perspective on the issue at hand, including levels of authority and political views on the issue. By the end of this era, the original view of the client defined by formal organizational structures was being challenged because of acknowledgement of the complexity of the structure of US authority in a shared power system. Few decisions had real authority to act unilaterally.

Era 2

The second era of the policy analysis field began in the 1970s and continued to the end of the twentieth century. Meltsner's 1976 book, *Policy Analysis in the Bureaucracy*, was based on interviews with top-level policy analysts in the US federal government (Meltsner 1976). Meltsner's typology differentiated between four types of analysts: those who had high political skills, those with low political skills, those with high technical skills, and those with low technical skills. While some of these elements were derived from the analyst's personal competencies, he linked the choice of analyst to the specific needs of the client.

While the Meltsner typology and analysis was embraced by a number of policy analysis researchers, few used that framework to explore the reasons and consequences of the work of each of the four types of policy analysts, particularly in the relationship between analysts and their clients. Instead attention focused on the supplier of the analysis, not on those who controlled the demand for it.

Meltsner's analysis noted that the analyst's client is not the same as the client of other professionals. The policy analysts he described served clients who are the users, not usually the beneficiaries of the work of the analysts. He picked up on a growing complexity in the client role and differentiated between formal and informal client, and between individuals and collective clients.

Meltsner's depiction supported the complications that Rivlin predicted. Policy analysts had very different clients to advise. The client for their work was no longer limited to the cabinet secretary. Officials up and down the bureaucracy sought advice from the growing group of policy analysts. Policy analysis found its way into the Congress as well as into the range of interest groups in Washington. Given limited budgets, the focus moved from creating new policies to finding ways to implement existing policies more effectively. Some evaluation techniques entered the approaches to analysis (Majone 1989; Lindblom and Cohen 1989; Weiss 1983) that confronted this complexity head-on.

The world that faced the early policy analysts in the federal government was very different from that confronting the policy analyst in the 1990s. That world experienced an

increase or proliferation of policy analysis offices and activities. The years that had elapsed since policy analysis activity began in the 1960s were characterized by dramatic economic, social and political changes in American society. The environment of possibility and optimism of the early 1960s was replaced by a mood of scarcity and skepticism. And as the century drew to an end, public policy within the United States was distinguished by strong value conflicts and issues.

When it became clear that policy analysis was becoming a part of the decisionmaking process and language, multiple actors within the policy environment began to use its forms and sometimes its substance. As a result, policy analysis became a field with many voices, approaches and interests. As it matured, the profession took on the structure and culture of American democracy, replacing the quite limited practice found only in the top echelons of government bureaucracies that characterized the early stages.

The impact of these macro-level changes was not always obvious to policy analysis practitioners in the government. The agenda for many analysts focused mainly on changes in existing policies, not on the creation of new policies and programs.

Policy analysts began to question whether the policy analysis units should be established only at the top of the organizations, looking to the top executives and senior line staffers as the clients for analysis (Rivlin 1998).

By the mid-1970s policy analysis activities had dramatically increased throughout the structure of federal government agencies. As a result, clients for policy analysis were found all over the federal establishment. Most of the units began in the top reaches of departments or agencies. But as time went on, policy analysis offices appeared throughout federal agency structures, attached to specific program units as well as mid-level structures. As it became clear that the terms of policy discourse would be conducted (at least superficially) in analytic terms, those who had responsibility for subunits within departments or agencies were not willing to allow policy shops attached to the top of the organization to maintain a monopoly on analytic activity. Their creation of their own policy units was often triggered by a reluctance to defer to the centralized unit in the offices of the secretary or agency head. By the mid-1980s, any respectable program unit had its own policy staff – individuals who were not overwhelmed by the techniques and language of the staff of the original policy units and who could engage in debate with them or even convince them of other ways of approaching issues.

As a result, staffers appeared to become increasingly socialized to the policy cultures and political structures with which they were dealing. Those staffers who stayed in an office for significant periods of their careers became attached to and identified with specific program areas and took on the characteristics of policy area specialists, sometimes serving as the institutional memory within the department (Radin 1997).

The institutionalization and proliferation of policy analysis through federal departments (not simply at the top of the structure) also contributed to changes in the behavior of those in the centralized policy analysis units. Those officials became highly interactive in their dealings with analysts and officials in other parts of the departments. Increasingly, policy development took on the quality of debate or bargaining between policy analysts found in different parts of the agency. Longevity and specialization combined to create organizational units made up of staff members with commitments to specific policy areas (and sometimes to particular approaches to those policies). Conflict between staff charged with implementation responsibilities and those with analytic responsibilities became more common. In some of the larger federal agencies, the centralized policy shops grew in

size, moving from small, almost intimate work groups to compartmentalized and specialized bureaucracies. Recruitment patterns over the years broadened the methodological approach, and the early reliance on economics was complemented by other approaches.

As a result of the spread of the function, staff implicitly redefined the concept of “client”. Though there had always been some tension over the client definition – it could be your boss, the secretary, the president, the society, or the profession – the proliferation of the profession made this even more complicated. In part this was understandable as analysts developed predictable relationships with programs and program officials over time. Not only were clients the individuals (or groups) who occupied top-level positions within the organization, but clients for analysis often became those involved in the institutional processes within the agency as well as the maintenance of the organization itself. Institutional processes included the standard operating decision procedures in federal agencies (such as planning, budgeting, regulation drafting and legislative drafting (Nelson 1989)).

Analysts, not their clients, became the first-line conduit for policy bargaining. The relationships among policy analysts became even more important by the late 1970s, when the reality of limited resources meant that policy debate was frequently focused on the modification of existing programs, not on the creation of new policies. Clients could often predict the outcome of an analysis because the analyst was known to prefer a particular approach to an issue. There are stories told about policy analysts who completed analyses that were ignored by one set of decisionmakers. The balance of dominance between analysts and clients showed signs of tipping.

By the mid-1980s, policy analysis activities across the federal government took on the coloration of the agencies and policy issues with which they worked. Agencies with highly specialized and separate subunits invested more resources in the development of policy analysis activities in those subunits than in the offices in centralized locations. Other units, such as those found in inspector general’s offices, actually performed short-term evaluations (Thompson and Yessian 1992).

Despite these developments, in many instances the role definitions of the policy analyst continued to be expressed in the language and rhetoric of earlier years. One new policy deputy assistant secretary said that his staff members told him that their role was to advise the secretary – yet when queried further, they admitted that none of them had ever had direct contact with the secretary, and what was perceived to be secretarial advising took place through multiple layers of the bureaucracy.

The dynamic that spawned the proliferation of policy units within the bureaucracy similarly stimulated the developments outside the organizations. If the policy discourse was conducted in the language of analysis, then one needed to have appropriate resources available to engage in that discussion. It was clear that different clients emerged with quite different agendas.

Carol H. Weiss (1989, p. 3) noted that at least some congressional staffers treat analysts “less as bearers of truth and clarity than as just another interest group beating on the door”, but analysts did not always agree with that set of perceptions about their role. In addition, members of Congress find that they must be in a position to evaluate the work of others; they must be on top of the analytic work produced by agencies and others and help their bosses avoid surprises.

Other observers have noted that policy analysis work is of limited utility when ideology has taken over policy debate. Congressional staff members who were participants in the

welfare reform debate in the 1990s have suggested that analysis and research are effective only at the margins.

As a result of these changes, clients were found in every nook and cranny in the city and increasingly policy analysis became integrated into the decisionmaking process. Yet it was never clear what criteria would be used to assess the impact of those activities. Analysts began to emerge not only in Washington but many were found in state and local settings. The personal relationship between an organization's top official and a mid-level policy analyst had become tenuous. Often the various players in the negotiation brought their own policy analysts with them. Clients of the analyst were not only decisionmakers attached to specific policies but also those involved in the institutional processes of governing (e.g. planning, budgeting, regulation development, legislative drafting).

Clients seemed to expect their analysts to employ both analytic and advocacy roles within a diverse array of organizations, suggesting that they were departing from the earlier image of the economist as an analyst qua analyst. The lines between the two players became increasingly fuzzy.

Era 3

By the beginning of the twenty-first century the policy analysis field had moved in even more different directions than it had in its previous two eras. It is this set of developments that challenges us today. Yet the new approaches did not always replace the practices of the two earlier eras and the field itself became much more diverse in both role and use of analytic techniques. While up to that point the field had been largely dominated by both practitioners and academics in the US, there was increasing recognition that globalization was now a reality in both the practice and teaching of policy analysis. Fresh attention was given to the differences between Westminster parliamentary systems and the US shared powers system in terms of the types of analysts who were involved but also in terms of the clients who were a part of the relationship.

We began to understand that the relative importance of different goals, if not the goals themselves, will vary across regimes and societies. These goals were often embedded in the assumptions and expectations of the relevant client. This was quite different than the model created by the New Public Management advocates who sought to apply perspectives and assumptions from the private sector to the public sector and to move toward a "one size fits all" approach across the globe. Most obviously, different countries are likely to have different constitutional constraints that must be satisfied in routine policymaking. Additionally, analysts working in different countries may argue for different tradeoffs among goals because of differences in the societies they are trying to make better. Thus, clients are likely to be different as one moves across the globe. They may be asking for different sets of plausible policy alternatives that may require new ways of anticipating goals or tradeoffs (Weimer 2012, p. 4). The diversity of approaches found today across the globe provides a rich environment for comparative analysis of the role of clients and their relationship to diverse types of analysts. Yet this set of issues has been largely unexplored in the policy analysis field.

During this period there are also some more general developments in the policymaking process that are likely to influence client expectations. It appears that there has been an increase in client expectations about analysts playing an advocacy role in the way they frame their work. Advocacy creates several difficult situations. It may increase the tension

between the client and the analyst if the two players have very different expectations. Part of this is due to the increase in politicization of so many issues. In addition, clients may push for advocacy of an approach with which the analyst does not agree.

Thus views about decisionmaking processes have moved to quite a different approach. The individual client was often framed in the hierarchical decisionmaking model. In that model, decisions followed the traditional hierarchical structure and thus the assumed client would have authority and power to make a decision. By the end of the twentieth century, however, policy analysts often assumed that decisionmaking was the result of a bargaining process. Thus the proliferation of analysts and analytic organizations fit nicely into the bargaining relationships between multiple players, most of whom were located somewhere within the governmental structure.

By the first decade of the twenty-first century, another approach was added to the decisionmaking repertoire: the use of networks. The desires of the client are also complicated by the movement toward decisionmaking networks. But since a network involves multiple players, it is much more difficult to hone in on the specific needs of those involved in decisionmaking inside the complex arrangements, particularly when the issues at hand involve global players.

Although networks have captured the interest of scholars in a variety of fields both in the US and abroad, it is not always clear how they operate as a formal decisionmaking approach. This set of developments cries out for new analyses. These are issues that are embedded in situations where the client for the work of a policy analyst is the network itself. Since the network is not an entity with clear or simple goals, how does the analyst determine the interests of the body when – by design – it contains players drawn from multiple interests and settings? And many of those interests represent substantive policy conflicts. These conflicts can emerge from the combination of public sector and private sector players, representatives of interest groups, multiple public agencies, and players from the various nodes of the intergovernmental system. In addition, studies of various networks indicate that the interaction of the network itself is crucial and thus it is difficult to focus on substantive policy outcomes when the process of interaction is so important to its success. McGuire and Agranoff note that it is not always clear where the boundaries lie between government agency and network (McGuire and Agranoff 2011). It is difficult to characterize the patterns that have emerged as a result of the globalization of the policy analysis field and which have modified the role of the client in the policy analysis effort. Some countries have actually renamed existing data and planning offices and cast them as policy analysis organizations. In other countries, career staff (usually generalists) who traditionally acted as advisors to the party in power have become the core of the policy analysis enterprise. The demise of the Soviet Union provided the impetus in some nations for an organizational unit that could provide advice on alternatives to previous approaches. In still other settings, policy analysis units have been established within autocratic governments to provide at least a façade of openness and a move toward democracy.

Variation in policy analysis approaches can be attributed to the structure of government (e.g. whether it is a centralized or federal system) or to the historic demands of eliminating colonialism, achieving democracy or responding to the end of the Soviet Union. But if anyone was pushed to come up with those comparisons, they are likely to have emphasized the differences in the political structure between a parliamentary system where the

executive branch is viewed as a part of the legislative branch and the shared power institutional design found in the US between legislative, executive and judicial systems.

Conclusion

The original concept of the client of the policy analyst was an individual who has authority and is usually located at the top echelons of a public organization. This was modified in the second generation of the profession. But even Meltsner's description of four types of policy analysts seemed to assume that the policy analyst would have a quasi-monopoly role in that advising process.

The three different generations that can be identified in the development of the policy analysis field has generated different views and roles of clients. And it is likely that another generation will come to pass in the future. It is not surprising that this field is constantly developing and moving since it operates within a highly turbulent environment. At the time of writing, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, it is clear that globalization has had a significant impact on the field, and shifts in the type of decision-making have also created challenges for policy analysts since they are now clearly in so many nooks and crannies in the decisionmaking world. Thus it is relevant to look at the work that they do, the skills that they require, and the background experience that is relevant to them. A comparative lens that captures developments and changes over time as well as contrasts between political systems provides a way of describing this complex and constantly changing field.

All of this is to indicate that it is important for policy analysts to acknowledge the changes that have occurred in our field. This suggests that we must acknowledge that the relationship between analyst and client is important to examine as well as our own methodologies and theories. It is not clear where that relationship will be in 10 or 20 years. However, it is clear that clients and their expectations have changed over the more than 50 years of our field. These call out for a serious comparative analysis effort to capture the changes in the role and experience of the decisionmaker client.

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