

- c. In your opinion, how reliable and valid are your findings?
- d. How do your results compare with other classmates' conclusions?

Critique the Facilitator

Critique the performance of the facilitator in this discussion. (A discussion of facilitation skills is included later in Chapter 8.)

- a. Did the facilitator intervene at the right moments? Are there examples where the facilitator should have intervened but did not or where the facilitator intervened inappropriately?
- b. Are there examples of the facilitator using leading questions?
- c. Did the facilitator ever inappropriately interject his or her own opinion into the discussion?
- d. Were the questions asked appropriate? If not, what questions would you have asked and why?

Surveys and Focus Groups

Having read this transcript, what do you believe are the strengths and weaknesses of focus group research as compared to what you know about mail survey research? If you were to design a survey based on the results of this focus group session, what questions would you ask, and what responses would you let them choose from?

Symbols and Metaphors

Can you find examples of participants using symbols or metaphors in their responses? What about their use of causes and Stone's discussion? Does the understanding of Stone's symbolic representation help in understanding the responses?

What Next?

From a practical perspective, what could a policy analyst do with this information? Is this approach more democratic than other types of policy analysis, or is it merely an exercise in postpositivism that takes us nowhere?

Notes

- 1 In November 2002, Randy Clemons participated in a round-table discussion with Larry Lynn and Michael Munger (organized by Francine Sanders Romero) at the Southern Political Science Association Conference in Savannah, Georgia. The discussion focused on different approaches to policy analysis, and it was a pleasant and instructive exchange of ideas.
- 2 In 1997, Kim Quaile Hill, Paul Sabatier, and Edella Schlager engaged in a scholarly exchange of ideas in the journal *Policy Currents*. Their focus was the development status of systematic and generalizable theory in the field of policy studies. Sabatier and Schlager both identified the advocacy coalition framework and the institutional rational choice model as the two most-developed theories. Hill initiated the debate with the call for greater attention to theory building, including the use of what he labeled "ambitious case study scholarship and use."
- 3 This approach is discussed in Chapter 8, and we will provide some actual democratic tools of analysis and policymaking.
- 4 The rational choice model and public choice theory are both models for explaining and predicting behavior of individuals in a society. Both assume that individuals are goal-seeking and will always seek to improve their position in life. The individual seeks to maximize. Therefore, we can view policymaking as equivalent to individuals pursuing private goods in a marketplace. The individual will pursue his or her own interest and only support using tax dollars in so far as the public project delivers benefits that exceed the tax dollar investment made by the individual.
- 5 For an excellent discussion of the imperatives of bureaucratic culture, see Hummel (1994), chapter 2.
- 6 It is interesting to note that *bureaucracy* is a symbol that over the past two decades has been the enemy of both liberals and conservatives. Bureaucracy-bashing is very much part of elected official rhetoric. Calls for government