

tax relief for low income groups and elderly taxpayers; according to Aaron, "Rarely has an idea so rapidly gained such widespread acceptance despite the weakness of the major premises on which it rests" (p. 72). Such devices, Aaron notes, concentrate their benefits on families with above-average wealth in any given income group, on those with especially strong tastes for housing, and on those with fluctuating, rather than stable, annual incomes. None of these family characteristics establishes a strong case for tax subsidies. Another questionable practice is the granting of special exemptions or abatements on farmland at or near the urban fringe. Commendable as the goal of these devices may be, and even that is debatable, they "reduce taxes for owners of a rapidly appreciating asset and, hence, rapidly growing wealth" (p. 86). Better measures, such as tax deferral plans and zoning controls, are available whenever there is clear evidence that economic markets are producing socially undesirable results.

There is more in the book than can be discussed here and much that should stimulate and enlighten public debate about our many property tax problems. If debate is so enhanced, the book will amply have fulfilled its purpose.

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Methodologies for Analyzing Public Policies. Edited by Frank P. Scioli, Jr., and Thomas J. Cook. (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1975. Pp. 190. No price given.)

This is a ludicrously pretentious parody of a book, edited by a couple of sciolists, written by seventeen political scientists, and destined for dusty library shelves. Its thirteen "chapters" total some 40,000 words: the median chapter is only about 2,500 words long, shorter (and less original) than a sophomore's midterm paper. Short as they are, the chapters, with a couple of exceptions, are twice or thrice as wordy as their content deserves; no editor's blue pencil was at work here. These slight essays are puffed up into book form by including lengthy references, adding vacuous "introductions by the editors" to each section, and using large type and plenty of blank paper.

The most interesting parts of the book are the few scattered paragraphs that describe the use of quantitative methods to analyze policy questions. Two of the contributions stand out in this regard: Elinor Ostrom briefly discusses "the development of multimode measurements of two municipal services: street lighting and street repair," and Thomas R. Dye and Neuman F. Pollack illustrate the concepts of path analysis by investigating the

causal relationships among city size, income, race distribution, home owning, crime rates, revenue levels, and policy manpower levels. By focusing on the application of quantitative methods, these two articles make some contribution to policy analysis.

The remaining eleven chapters address (but by no means cover) such topics as social indicators, time series analysis, experimental design, and cost-benefit analysis. These chapters are largely superficial attempts to adumbrate the theory of some analytical techniques. For example, Virginia Gray's article, "The Use of Time Series Analysis in the Study of Public Policy," begins as follows:

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the appropriateness of time series regression applied to the policy process. We begin by arguing its theoretical value, then discuss the few extant examples of such research, and end with the technical problems involved.

Gray "argues its theoretical value" in five paragraphs: her argument is simply that "policy making is a process; it occurs over time within a governmental system such as a state." She "discusses" examples in three paragraphs, which merely contain brief abstracts of several studies. Finally, she devotes ten paragraphs to "the technical problems involved": the only problem considered, however, is autocorrelation.

Gray's article is essentially valueless in that anyone unfamiliar with time series analysis would have difficulty understanding it, anyone familiar with time series analysis would not learn anything by reading it, and anyone who wanted to learn about time series analysis should read a book on the subject. The other articles in the book can be similarly criticized: they are too slight and superficial to be useful.

If the editors had focused the book on the *application* of quantitative methods to policy analysis, they might have produced a useful volume. To have a group of political scientists write on the *theory* of quantitative methods, however, is foolish hubris. To paraphrase Samuel Johnson, a political scientist writing about the theory of quantitative methods is like a dog walking on his hind legs. It is not done well; and you are surprised to find it done at all.

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