uses such even when it might be wildly inappropriate, competent decision-making is in jeopardy. Specifically, the leader must be aware that the nature of a problem must in large measure determine what decision making model to use. The rational model may well work wonderfully if the leader wants to build a bridge or highway, for example, but that model probably will be near useless when dealing with deep-seated social problems (e.g., racism; poverty).

QUESTION 2

Study of the “environmental” aspects of organizational life was introduced in the late 1960's and has been a relatively stable area of inquiry since.

a. In your judgment, what three environmental elements are most important to contemporary public organizational life? Defend your choices.

b. Identify and discuss two environmental elements which, in your view, present opportunities (as opposed to difficulties) for the contemporary public organization.

c. Using the same two environmental elements identified in 2-b, above, discuss them with regard to the difficulties (as opposed to opportunities) they present for the contemporary public organization.

General Grading Criteria

1. You must answer the question.
2. You must answer all parts of the question
3. Your answer must exhibit excellent writing skills (which includes grammar, punctuation, syntax and spelling)
4. Your answer must be logical and well-organized.

Part a: The "environment" generally refers to those elements lying outside the boundaries of the organization, but you also could defensibly name some environmental factors that are internal to the organization (e.g., conflict; inadequate training; corrosive culture).

Among the outside elements you could choose are, but are not limited to: people (e.g., citizens, clients, regulators, inspectors, politicians); other organizations (legislatures; contractors; the judiciary; other governmental organizations); economics (e.g., budgets; budget cuts; commercial revenue; tax shortfalls; deficits); objects (e.g., vehicles; physical plants/buildings); and events (e.g., weather; new legislation; downsizing; cutting/adding contractors)

Part b: A competent response to this part of the question will depend upon the quality of your arguments and your ability to logically and clearly defend your choices.

Part c: A competent response to this part of the question will depend upon the quality of your arguments and your ability to logically and clearly defend your choices.
Grading Criteria
Comprehensive Exams, Spring 2004
PPA 670 Policy Issue Analysis

At minimum:
1. You must answer the question.
2. You must answer all parts of the question.
3. You must exhibit good writing skills
4. You must present logical and well-reasoned arguments

Question 1

Recently in your city, a mother was arrested and charged with child abuse for spanking her 7-year old son in the front yard of their home. This incident raises the issue of what properly constitutes a public policy issue. As a policy analyst for the state government sent to review this incident, discuss how you will address the following issues:

a. Did the mother’s actions constitute a violation of public policy on child abuse? Why or why not?

b. How will you determine the scope and boundaries of the locality’s policy on child abuse?

Grading Criteria

Minimally acceptable answer (pass)—must include 1-5 below
1. Addresses the question that was asked
2. Addresses all parts of the question (a, b)
3. Must correctly identify the public policy issue(s).
4. Must correctly identify the scope and boundaries of the public policy issue, including:
   A. High-low structure
   B. Extensiveness/Intensity
   C. Macro-micro scale
   D. Cross-sectional/longitudinal
   E. Problem type
5. Answer is well-written, logical and complete.

Unacceptable answer (fail)—any of the following is a fail:
1. Does not address the question that was asked
2. Does not address all parts of the question (a, b)
3. Does not identify public policy issue involved
4. Does not correctly identify the scope and boundaries of the issue

Core Concepts--Question 2

Understanding of the steps involved in cost-benefit (CBA) and cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA)
Understanding the difference in applying CBA and CEA
Understanding the problem of assigning money value to public benefits

QUESTION 2

Two of the primary tools of economic evaluation of policy choices are cost-benefit analysis and cost-effectiveness analysis. Discuss:

a. What are the steps to each approach?

b. When is one technique more suitable than the other?

c. What is the difficulty with monetizing benefits and how do analysts address the problem?

Question 2 -- Grading Criteria

Minimally acceptable answer (pass)—must include 1-6 below
1. Addresses the question that was asked
2. Addresses all parts of the question (a, b, c)
3. Must correctly identify the steps for both CBA and CEA.
4. Must correctly identify criteria for selecting CBA or CEA
5. Must identify correct techniques and strategies for monetizing benefits
6. Answer is well-written, logical and complete.

Unacceptable answer (fail)—any of the following is a fail:
A. Does not address the question that was asked
B. Does not address all parts of the question (a, b, c)
C. Does not identify correct steps for CBA or CEA
D. Does not correctly identify criteria for selecting CBA or CEA
E. Does not correctly identify techniques and strategies for monetizing benefits
F. Answer is not logical, or not well-written, or not persuasive
QUESTION 1

The University is concerned with the dropout rate for undergraduate students, and wants to better understand why undergraduate students don’t complete their degrees as well as to test whether a new but expensive program will help more students finish their degrees.

a. Identify a research design that would allow the University to better understand why undergraduate students drop out, and explain why this design is a good choice.

b. Identify a research design that would allow the University to test whether a new but expensive program will help more students finish their degrees, and explain why this design is a good choice.

Grading Criteria

1. You must answer the question.
2. You must answer all parts of the question.
3. You must exhibit good writing skills.
4. You must present logical and well-reasoned arguments.

Part A asks you to identify a research design that will provide detailed information about how something happened and why, which implies a qualitative design, such as a case study, a focus group, ... help to answer the University’s question, it also has a number of drawbacks, which are threats to internal validity.

Part B asks you to identify a research design that will provide evidence about whether or not a program has the desired effects on a target population, compared to other members of the population who do not experience the program. This implies an experimental or quasi-experimental design, such as the post-test only experimental design with random assignment to experimental or control groups, or a quasi-experimental post-test only comparison group design. You should thoroughly describe the design you select. While a qualitative design will help to answer the University’s question, it also has a number of drawbacks, which are threats to internal validity.

Grading Criteria

To alleviate traffic congestion on the 101 freeway, Los Angeles County is considering constructing additional High Occupancy Vehicle lanes. Anecdotal evidence suggests that significant opposition to this construction may exist among residents. The county is interested in collecting empirical data to measure this opposition and naturally assumes that stronger opposition exists among residents who live close to the freeway. A sample of 1,500 respondents will be constructed.

a. Suggest a sampling strategy that should be used and discuss why the chosen design is the best to use in this scenario.

b. Compare this strategy with at least two other probability designs.

Grading Criteria

An acceptable answer must be:

1. Well-written and argued.
2. A complete answer to the questions.

Part A - Since the county is interested in measuring the opposition to expansion of the freeway, generalizing the results from the sample to the population is certainly an important consideration. Therefore, the county will need a probability sampling strategy. If the county is interested in determining if opposition is greater among residents who reside close to the freeway, the county could select a Stratified Random Sampling design. In this type of design, the county could stratify the sample on the characteristic of proximity to the freeway in question.

Part B - This part requires a comparison with two probability strategies. Therefore, students may compare the strategy advocated in Part A with Simple Random Sampling, Systematic Sampling, or Cluster Sampling.

Simple Random Sampling is a more random process than Stratified Sampling as each case has an equal, non-zero probability of being selected for the sample. One limitation of Simple Random Sampling is the necessity of a sampling frame. It is likely that the county will have a sampling frame to utilize in selecting its sample.

Systematic Sampling is not purely random since it uses a skip interval to select cases for inclusion in the sample. It is not purely random since the skip interval will preclude the selection of some cases. Every case does not have an equal, non-zero probability of selection.
Cluster Sampling is another possibility in this scenario as the county may select random samples at multiple stages of the sampling process. Cluster Sampling may be more resource intensive than the other sampling strategies mentioned above.