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Bounded Rationality and Political Science: Lessons from Public Administration and Public Policy

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Abstract

By 1958, a model of human behavior capable of serving as the microlevel foundation for organizational and policy studies was in place. The scientific soundness of that model is unquestioned, yet the fundamentals of that behavioral model of choice have not yet been incorporated into political science. Much analysis relies on models of rational maximization despite the availability of a more scientifically sound behavioral base. In this article I examine the reasons for and ramifications of this neglect of sound science in political science, focusing primarily on public policy and public administration. While neither approach can lay claim to major successes in prediction, the behavioral model of choice predicts distributions of organizational and policy outputs in a superior fashion.

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