

Political Science 171: State Politics

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Public Policy: Innovations and Diffusions

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- Policy innovations can *diffuse* or spread from one jurisdiction to another
- If policies in one state appear to work – both programmatically and politically – then other states may well adopt the same policies
- Diffusion – process of learning or emulation during which decision makers look to other states as models to be followed or avoided

Innovativeness

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- Measurement typically is based on the speed with which state officials adopted a set of programs
- Incorporate a large number of policy innovations, examining variation across policy types
- Indices are developed from the analysis of all these different policy types

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- Indicators of slack: 1) Fiscal Strength; 2) Legislative professionalism – both facilitate the early adoption of policy innovations

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 - Levels of education
 - States with higher levels of political competition – makes lawmakers more responsive to citizens
 - Liberal states display general openness to policy change/activity; conservative states tend to be less receptive to changes in status quo

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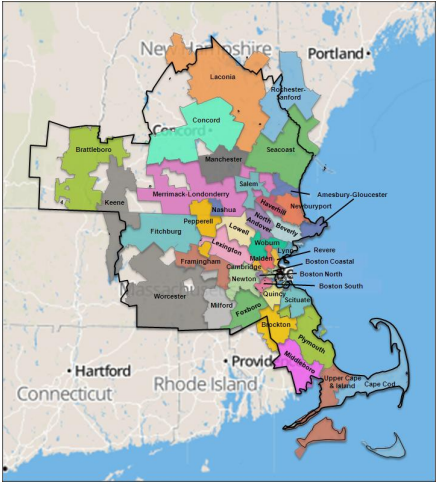
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 - Nearby states are likely to be culturally/demographically similar

Boston Media Market



Percent Black by State – Top States

By 2010 census results [\[edit\]](#)

Rank ↕	State ↕	African-American Alone Population (2010) ^[1] ↕	% African-American ↕
1	Mississippi	1,074,200	37.30%
2	Louisiana	1,452,396	31.98%
3	Georgia	3,150,435	31.4%
4	Maryland	1,700,298	29.44%
5	South Carolina	1,290,684	28.48%
6	Alabama	1,251,311	26.38%
7	North Carolina	2,048,628	21.60%
8	Delaware	191,814	20.95%
9	Virginia	1,551,399	19.91%
10	Tennessee	1,055,689	16.78%
11	Florida	2,999,862	15.91%
12	Arkansas	449,895	15.76%
13	New York	3,073,800	15.18%

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- Or states may lower welfare benefits to decrease undesirables.
Or develop anti-homeless policies.

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- Policy innovations spread because lawmakers imitate their colleagues who operate in similar environments

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- Also assumes states will not adopt policies that are poor innovations

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- Voters have very limited choices through the ballot process

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- Punctuated Equilibrium
- Most theories are tested in national politics, but still quite relevant to state-level politics

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- Example: Fishing and oceans – anyone with a boat can fish, in your incentive to get as much fish as possible, but if everyone does it, guess what, no more fishes!
- Governance structures can be established to overcome the common pool problem – institutions help shift individual incentives away from noncooperative, suboptimal equilibria into more optimal outcomes with greater collective benefits

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- Sometimes, a window of opportunity opens in which the three streams interact to form new policies; but also occur somewhat randomly
- Builds on, yes, Garbage Can Theory – which assumes high level of ambiguity in a dynamic process with changing players, poorly defined problems, unclear goals, and uncertainty about how inputs leads to policy outputs...great

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- Problem: There seems to be too much randomness to the model

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- Policy experts working in policy-specific subsystems (i.e., water, forest management, health care) form coalitions; coalitions form around system of core beliefs about nature of problems
- Thus, most policymaking is basically a negotiation among advocates within the policy subsystem
- However, assumes dynamic changes in partisan control of institutions, societal structures, and intrusions from other policy subsystems can contribute to major policy changes over time

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- Environmental pressures build up such that bigger change can occur – or external shocks to the system (natural disaster, industrial accident, stock market crash covered widely in media) can be “focusing events” leading to sudden policy change