

11.800, Knowledge in the Public Arena: The Uses and Abuses of Research
Professors Xavier de Souza, Frank Levy, and Martin Rein
Session 4

Guest Lecturer: Jal Mehta

- I. Overview of Readings
 - a. Mehta, Jal. "The Causes and Consequences of Policy Paradigm Shift: American Education Policy, 1980-2001,"
 - b. Five Questions:
 - i. Why did education rise on public policy agenda?
 - ii. Why did issues of standards and accountability appear at center of issue despite opposition of major interest group?
 - iii. Why did the reform have different types of backers despite the fact that it could have been very controversial?
 - iv. Why did parties with different stances on education come together to support education reform?
 - v. Why did the reform emphasize a new institutional pattern that gave more power to the state and federal government rather than local school districts
 - c. Data Sources:
 - i. A Nation At Risk
 1. Emphasizes start of new paradigm
 - a. Economic importance of good schools
 - b. Importance of improvement across the board
 - c. Success measured through testing
 2. Criticisms
 - a. Test comparisons across countries not valid
 - i. Only some students are tested
 - ii. Testing is very different in other countries
 - b. Drowned out
 - ii. Three State Level Cases
 - iii. No Child Left Behind
 - d. Bricolage
 - i. Emphasis of linking issues already on agenda rather than introduce entirely new issues/ideas
- II. Dissertation Research
 - a. Interest in ideas of generative metaphors
 - i. How does the policy of political dialogue work?
 - ii. Dissertation = Question + Competing Hypotheses
 - iii. Methodology depends on question
 1. Focus on states based on literature – state changes preceded federal changes
 2. What is left to explain: How did convergence grow out of diversity?
 - a. 3 States differ on many variables
 - b. Lots of research on leading states (Texas, North Carolina, Kentucky)
- III. Ideas
 - a. Critical driver of changes in education policy
 - b. Many policies can emerge that are consistent with a paradigm
 - c. Opportunities for policy entrepreneurs to push policies consistent with framework of paradigm

- d. When can space be moved? When is it important to remain within existing space?
- e. Ability to tell story only accomplished by ignoring/downplaying facts that were inconsistent
- f. How did we get away from the cyclical, pendulum swinging nature of education policy?
 - i. Paradigm tied to persistent forces in US economy
- IV. Researchers
 - a. Important at the level of framing solutions
 - b. Overlapping of major policy actors in various arenas
- V. Stories and Framing
 - a. Deborah Stone reading
 - i. Symbols
 - 1. Ambiguity
 - a. Important element of symbols
 - b. Synchronize diverse viewpoints to make collective action possible
 - 2. Three types of symbol
 - a. Narrative Story
 - i. Story of decline (declensionist narrative)
 - ii. Intentional causal story
 - 1. Rational Action
 - 2. Oppression
 - b. Synecdoche
 - i. Part represents the whole
 - ii. Can lead to skewed policy
 - iii. Useful organizing tool
 - iv. Allows greater identification
 - v. Reduces problem scope
 - c. Metaphors
 - i. Implied comparisons
 - ii. Important for strategic representation of policy analysis
 - iii. Allow jump from description to prescription
 - 3. Language
 - a. Language matters
 - b. Appearance of moral correctness
 - ii. Numbers
 - 1. Important for problem definition
 - 2. Importance of categorization before counting
 - a. Judgments of inclusion/exclusion
 - b. Donald Schoen reading
 - i. Framing
 - 1. Generative Metaphor
 - a. Metaphor is both product and process
 - b. Process by which new perspectives on the world come into existence
 - ii. Approaches to Social Policy
 - 1. Problem Solving
 - 2. Problem Setting
 - a. More opportunities in policy world

- b. Naming and framing allows for normative leap
from description to prescription
 - iii. Frame Restructuring
 - 1. Similar to making of the generative metaphor
 - iv. Examples
 - 1. West End settlements in Boston
 - c. Scheiber reading
 - i. Limitations of reframing
 - 1. Acts of communication