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Decision-making in Interest Groups: A Case Study of Charter School Policy Adoption

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In a line from the television show, *The West Wing*, White House staffers discussed a favored bill's likelihood of passage, declaring, "La Raza and NAA are on board." From this simple endorsement, a fairly large swathe of the American public was assumed to be in support of the issue at hand. This line from a television program raises an interesting question. When the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) and the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)—two of the largest national Hispanic organizations—take a position on a political issue, how accurately does that reflect the perspective of all Hispanics?

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* Deirdre Martinez (Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania) currently serves as the Director of the Fels Public Policy Internship Program at the University of Pennsylvania. Her dissertation, prepared under the direction of Margaret E. Goertz, is entitled *Interest Group Goal Formation: The Response to Charter Schools by NCLR and LULAC*. Dr. Martinez was awarded the Outstanding Dissertation in the Politics of Education for 2006-07.

Education Advocacy in Washington: Anything New?

Gerald E. Sroufe†
American Educational Research Association
Washington, DC

Upon returning to Washington some 20 years after leaving the National Institute for Education, noted education scholar Mike Timpane was asked how federal education policymaking had changed in his absence. He observed that, "the only change of consequence in Washington was the advent of dress-down Friday."

Many agreed with him about that relatively quiet period of education policy and politics, but no member of the Politics of Education Association likely would repeat his observation with regard to the period initiated with the Newt Gingrich revolution in 1994. My task in this brief paper is to remind readers of political phenomena that have endured, and to call attention to a few aspects of the federal policy world that appear to be new.

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT:

BRUCE S. COOPER
FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

Greetings:

The Politics of Education Association was formed in 1969 to serve the field of education and the related research community—and our members have done just that. We do important research on how politics, in theory and practice, affect education, whether it is its organization, policies, funding, operations, and outcomes. Someone once said that “everything is political in some way”, and we’re trying to understand just how that works for schools and their children. We are continuing to grow our membership, building new programs, and working hard to serve our members through these new outreach initiatives:

Teaching the politics of education. We are establishing a page on the PEA website to house and make available our Politics of Education course syllabi, assignments, reading lists, and handouts. We are calling this on-line initiative the *Politics of Education Teaching Services*, or POETS. It is a place that you can go for help in preparing and updating your teaching materials—and sharing the results. Its success depends on you, so please send your politics of education teaching materials to Dana Mitra at Penn State (dmitra@psu.edu) who has agreed to organize the effort.

Publicizing your new books and article. We also have a way to announce your books and articles on educational politics. There is a section devoted to publications in the *PEA Bulletin*. This section will include authors’ names, the book or article title, and a 100-word summary. Contact Co-editors Kyle Ingle at Bowling Green State University (wingle@bgsu.edu) or Brendan Maxcy at the University of Missouri (maxcyb@missouri.edu) about getting word out to PEA members through the *PEA Bulletin*.

**The
Politics of Education Association
Business Meeting
will be held at the
University Council for Educational
Administration 2007 Convention**

Saturday, November 17, 2007
7:00-7:50 am
(Continental Breakfast will be served)
Birch Room A
Hilton Alexandria Mark Hotel
Alexandria, Virginia

Guest Speaker will be
Frederick Hess
Of the American Enterprise Institute

Looking Past the Next Election in School Reform

Increasing our membership. Since PEA was reconstituted into Division L—Policy & Politics, we have worked to find and sign up new members (and keep former ones). I am proud to announce that, based on dues paid in 2006, PEA has 226 members. If you are not paid up, please renew your membership today. We now have a Membership Committee, chaired by Tamara Young, at NC State University, who will handle your inquiries about joining PEA and renewing your membership either directly or when registering with AERA. She can be reached via email at tamara_young@ncsu.edu.

Preparing for AERA. John Sipple (Cornell University) and Gregg Garn (University of Oklahoma), our able AERA program co-chairs for PEA, will put together a great program for AERA in New York for March 28-31, 2008. A list of our sessions will be published in the Spring *Bulletin*.

PEA Yearbook 2007-2009. We are publishing two journal issues in 2007, one in 2008, and 2 in 2009. One is now available as a special issue of *Education Policy* – which doubles as our yearbook – is edited by Katie Bulkley & Lance Fusarelli on the “Politics of Privatization.” The other, published as a special issue of the *Peabody Journal of Education*, is entitled “The Media, Democracy, and the Politics of Education” and is edited by Cynthia Gerstl-Pepin & Darleen Opfer. You should have already received your 2006 and 2007 PEA Yearbooks. The *PJE* issue will be mailed out later this year. Rick Ginsberg (University of Kansas) and I are editing the 2008 yearbook on Fear in Educational Politics, which is well underway now.

PEA Handbook. Lance Fusarelli (North Carolina State University), Jim Cibulka (University of Kentucky), and I have reviewed the 24 chapters of a *Politics of Education Handbook: Theory, Practice, and the Future* to be published by Lawrence Erlbaum (recently bought by Taylor & Francis, in England). We appreciate everyone’s hard work in contributing to the volume.

PEA Awards. Dr. Deirdre Martinez (University of Pennsylvania) has won the Outstanding Dissertation in the Politics of Education for 2006-07 for her

dissertation “Interest Group Goal Formation: The Response to Charter Schools by NCLR and LULAC” prepared under the direction of Margaret E. Goertz at the University of Pennsylvania. We are also pleased to announce Donald H. Layton as the recipient of the David L. Colton Award for devoted service to the development and history of the Politics of Education Association. These recipients were recognized for their achievements at AERA 2007 in Chicago. Congratulations!

We will be making awards for 2008 in NYC. If you wish to be nominated for the outstanding dissertation award for 2008, make contact with your advisors and mentors, and have them contact Dorothy Shipps at Baruch College, CUNY. Dorothy is again chairing the Outstanding Dissertation Awards Committee. We thank her for all of the hard work and willingness to serve our organization. Dorothy can be reached via email at: Dorothy_shipps@baruch.cuny.edu. Jim Cibulka (University of Kentucky) is chairing the new Outstanding Contribution to PEA AWARDS, and in 2008, we shall award the Stephen K. Bailey Award for research, and the Roald Campbell Award for making a contribution to PEA and the field; so make nominations to our Outstanding Member Awards to Jim Cibulka (at Cibulka@uky.edu), who’s chairing that committee.

We are also preparing for the election of officers (President and Treasurer) of PEA, to be held at our annual Business Meeting this year at AERA in New York City. After 4 years, I shall be handing the reins (and the emails) over to our new leadership. If you would like to nominate someone for an office, please contact the chair of our PEA Elections Committee, Stacey Rutledge (Florida State University). She can be reached at rutledge@coe.fsu.edu.

In closing, please take a look at our website at <http://www.fsu.edu/~pea/>. Contact us with your suggestions. We always welcome your participation. Email me with your ideas.

Bruce S. Cooper
President, PEA

PERSPECTIVES ~

How Do Districts Maintain a Commitment to Racial Diversity Without Using Race?

Clair Smrekar[‡]
Vanderbilt University

NOTE: The following is an abbreviated version of a commentary by Claire Smrekar in Teachers College Record regarding the recent Supreme Court ruling disallowing the use of race as the determining criterion in district efforts to reduce racial isolation. The full commentary was published online July 16, 2007 by Teacher College Record and may be viewed at:

<http://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentId=14549>

It was clear from the volley of questions that peppered attorneys for the school districts in Louisville, Kentucky and Seattle, Washington on December 4, 2006, that race-based student assignment plans were threatened by the leanings of the new conservative majority on the Court (and the absence of Justice O'Connor's moderate views). This past summer, the Court essentially eliminated any practical (if not legal) approach to reducing racial isolation in schools by asserting that such efforts equated to "racial discrimination," in the words of Chief Justice John Roberts. The Chief Justice was neither narrow nor nuanced in a 5-4 majority opinion that asserted: "The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race." Thus, the final hammer blow was struck to the hundreds of districts nationwide that currently use students' race in student assignment and parent choice plans. What were these districts doing and why were they doing it?

[‡] Claire Smrekar is an Associate Professor of Education and Public Policy at Vanderbilt University. She is the author of the forthcoming book, *Does Race Matter? The Shifting Landscape of School Desegregation in American Cities*. Professor Smrekar's research on magnet schools and on Department of Defense schools was included in two separate amicus briefs filed in the Louisville and Seattle cases.

How the Court got it Wrong

In sum, the districts failed to "justify the extreme means they have chosen – discriminating among individual students based on race..." The majority opinion suggested that race could be taken into consideration by districts like Louisville if race were one of many considered student factors (and not the only factor), including other background characteristics, special talents and special needs. This was the decision rule applied by Justice O'Connor in her majority opinion in the landmark 2003 University of Michigan Law School admissions case known as Grutter. In other words, Louisville was using race in a singular, mechanical, and unconstitutional way, according to the majority. Again the majority opinion is clear: students must be considered individually and holistically in any assignment plan that uses race and is pegged to the aims of racial diversity.

The problem with this reasoning is simple. This approach may be possible in a law school (or in some colleges) but surely impossible in most urban school districts that must assign tens of thousands of students every year across up to (and sometimes more than) 100 schools. Besides, the "special talents" that can be found in a five-year old are quite different than what can be discerned from a 22-year old applicant to a law school. If this individualized review process were possible under current conditions and resources, wouldn't districts ideally adopt or propose this policy as a plank of their diversity aims? But this approach is surely not possible or practical.

The Problem of Practicality

Justice Kennedy, in a concurring opinion that underscored that a district may consider it a "compelling interest to achieve a diverse student population," offered race neutral mechanisms designed to achieve the aims of racial diversity: 1) design student attendance zones to encompass a mix of racially defined/segregated neighborhoods; 2) build new schools in racially mixed neighborhoods or in areas that straddle racially identifiable

neighborhoods; and 3) develop special or unique programs.

The problems (or challenges) associated with these approaches are well known and well understood. The first remedy is often associated with cross-town busing plans that collect students from across racially segregated city neighborhoods and deposit them at a single school; this is antithetical to most parents' priorities of proximity of school and home. The cost of busing is extreme and the burden almost always born disproportionately by African American families. The second proposal bumps up against the reality of scarce resources for building new schools on real estate other than those parcels priced at the lowest end or in the least desirable sections of town. This could work well if only it were practical. Third, special programs as conceived by Justice Kennedy already exist in magnet schools but the patterns of re-segregation are clear and compelling in districts like Charlotte-Mecklenburg that were once desegregation success stories but now use race-neutral admissions. Why? Parents tend to choose schools that are closest to home (indeed, this is the "right" the Louisville parent sued for); patterns of housing segregation produce patterns of segregated neighborhood schools under these realities.

The Compelling Interest

Does race matter 50 years after the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision? *Brown* struck down the use of race as a mechanism used to segregate white and African American children? Yesterday, the majority struck down the use of race as a mechanism to integrate white and African American (and Latino) children. The Court's majority saw race, period. The Louisville and Seattle districts (and hundreds of others across the nation) saw the same mechanism – use of students' race – but a radically different goal: to integrate and to avoid racial segregation in schools.

The academic benefits of diversity are evidenced in the achievement gains for African American students who attend integrated schools. The story of *Brown* is the impressively large gains made by

African American students following the dismantling of segregated systems in the 1970s and 1980s – the height of desegregation activity in U.S. schools nationwide. But what is perhaps most paramount in this discussion is what occurs in the absence of racial diversity plans. This is the problem – and reality -- of inequity that is at the center of school desegregation policies. Segregated African American schools tend to reflect the concentrated poverty of the urban (or some rural) neighborhoods in which these students live. In other words, racially isolated schools for African American students usually translates into isolated, high poverty schools in which there is a higher proportion of inexperienced teachers, a higher turnover among teachers and students, more limited curriculum and educational resources, lower average achievement and higher dropout rates.

If Not Race, Then Class?

In response to a flurry of legal opinions in the past decade hostile to the use of race except under the most "narrowly tailored" conditions, some districts moved to using socio-economic status as mechanism for maintaining diversity in schools. Wake County, North Carolina is a notable example, in which students are assigned to schools based upon a family's social class. The problem – again, the reality – of this approach is that it depends on the density of poverty in a district. The Wake County district's poverty rate, as measured by the eligibility rate for the free and reduced lunch program, is a relatively low 24%, making the target of the 40% cap attainable. In most urban school districts, the rate is much higher, rendering the aim of socio-economic integration more of a dream than a reality. Class-based student assignment is not the panacea for this problem.

Moving Forward in the Dark

What priorities will shape school policies as districts react to this end to race-conscious desegregation plan? Should cities revisit a renewed focus upon housing policies that promote residentially integrated or mixed-income developments? In reality, that's often challenging

(e.g. zoning, space, residents' preferences) and certainly long-term. But this is a clarion call for new levels of will and capacity. Under these newly drawn Constitutional constraints, no one can now know the most efficacious approach to achieving the aim of diversity in schooling. Only one thing is certain after the most important Supreme Court rulings on race and education in over 50 years: the "color-blind" Constitution that the majority forcefully foisted upon the Louisville and Seattle districts will shape the lives of all school children well beyond their classrooms and corridors they occupy this academic year



OF INTEREST...

Please send updates on grants, awards, moves, and promotions to Roxanne Hughes, Managing Editor at rmh05e@fsu.edu

Do you have a book idea, proposal, or manuscript on the politics of education that you want to publish? If so, the Politics of Education Association has a book series published by Information Age. Please send your book idea, proposal, or manuscript to:

Bruce Cooper
Division of Educational Leadership,
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bscooperph@aol.com

Congratulations to Modupe Adelabu, who has been promoted to the rank of Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Administration and Planning at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

In order to keep the membership abreast of new scholarship on the politics of education, please send us news of recent publications (monographs, chapters, peer-reviewed articles, and reports) to Roxanne Hughes, Managing Editor at rmh05e@fsu.edu. Your submission should include the author(s)' name(s), the title, a 100-word summary, and a full citation.

The Political Dynamics of American Education

Frederick Wirt and Michael Kirst

In *The Political Dynamics of American Education*, Frederick Wirt (University of Illinois, Urbana) and Michael Kirst (Stanford University) use a conceptual framework to organize and chart the increasingly complex political web of American education. The competing forces of challenge and steady state affect all levels of policymaking and administration and constitute the "dynamic" nature of American education. This text—in print since 1972—was revised in 2005 to emphasize the political conflict and stress evident in recent reform challenges. The authors expand both on the current increase in local political activity and the external context of local schools to analyze the political momentum behind education standards and choice. At the same time, the limits of deregulation and centralized strategies are stressed as academic standards policies confront complex local politics. Each chapter covers the latest school politics research and reviews new "political" research dimensions and the current state of education politics scholarship. In addition, the authors consider the role of state government in influencing policy direction, as well as the political development of federal involvement in education.

Wirt, F.M., & Kirst, M.W. (2005). *The Political Dynamics of American Education*. Richmond, CA: McCutchan Publishing.

When Neighbours Matter Most: Innovation, Diffusion, and State Policy Adoption in Tertiary Education

Lora Cohen-Vogel and William Kyle Ingle

There is ample evidence that public policies diffuse across the American states; that is, policy adoption is due at least in part to the emulation of policies enacted in nearby states. But, policy adoption is the result of a complex process, a process that often takes years and sometimes decades to complete. According to the 'stage' or 'step' approach, the lawmaking process begins with the identification of a public problem for which redress by governments is sought and ends when programmes are implemented and effects are evaluated. Using the tertiary education system in the United States as a case, this study considers at what stage(s) in the policymaking process pressures created from neighboring states are brought to bear. Analysis of data from state policymakers reveals that the experiences of neighbors are most pronounced during the agenda-setting and proposal formulation stages and least during adoption.

Cohen-Vogel, L. & Ingle, W. K. (2007). When neighbours matter most: Innovation, diffusion and state policy adoption in tertiary education. *Journal of Education Policy*, 22 (3), 241-262.

Re-Framing Educational Politics for Social Justice

Catherine Marshall and Cynthia Gerstl-Pepin

This text challenges leaders, educators and researchers to grapple with the realities of educational politics and to act as positive advocates for social justice. The text offers strategies for educators to understand and take charge of educational politics and includes a range of new approaches to study politics. Each chapter is organized to provide frameworks and findings from traditional as well as new theories and methodologies and political strategies. The whole

book is oriented toward building critiquing skills, modeling successful political strategies, and doing politics differently to empower educators and researchers.

Marshall, C. & Gerstl-Pepin, C. (2005). *Re-Framing Educational Politics for Social Justice*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Education Reform in the American States

Jerry McBeath, Maria Elena Reyes and Mary Ehrlander

Education Reform in the American States is a timely evaluation of the accountability movement in American public education, culminating in the *No Child Left Behind Act*, federal legislation of 2002. The authors treat the current accountability movement, placing it in historical context and addressing the evolution in public education policymaking from the overwhelming emphasis on state and local discretion to increasing federal oversight and mandates related to federal funding. They provide case studies of the educational accountability movements in nine states and analyze the factors and forces which explain progress in achievement levels as measured on standardized tests and the states' prospects for meeting their NCLB targets. The book and the individual case studies acknowledge the merits of NCLB while exposing several significant flaws and unintended harmful consequences of the act, particularly its incentives for states to lower their standards in order to meet annual yearly progress targets and its threat to withdraw federal funds from districts with the highest percentage of disadvantaged students. The audience for this study includes local, state and federal education policymakers; administrators and instructors in schools of education and other teaching programs, educators; and the general public.

McBeath, J., Reyes, M. E., & Ehrlander, M. (2007). *Education Reform in the American States*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Religious Charter Schools: Legalities and Practicalities

Lawrence D. Weinberg

This book explores the constitutionality of religion-based charter schools, as grounded in law using the latest precedents. The legal context includes a detailed analysis of the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution. Weinberg concludes that charter schools present an opportunity for parents and communities to form charter schools that will accommodate their beliefs and are sensitive to the culture and morals of the religious group; however, the constitution does not allow them to form schools that endorse their beliefs.

Weinberg, L. (2007). *Religious Charter Schools: Legalities and Practicalities*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Policy Expansion of School Choice in the American States

Kenneth K. Wong and Warren E. Langevin

This research study explores the policy expansion of school choice within the methodological approach of event history analysis. The first section provides a comparative overview of state adoption of public school choice laws. After creating a statistical portrait of the contemporary landscape for school choice, the authors introduce event history analysis as a methodological solution to the problem of measuring policy expansion. Building on previous studies in the social science literature, we proceed to examine political, economic, and social factors related to the passage of charter school laws through a multivariate analysis of publicly accessible data.

Wong, K. K. & Langevin, W. E. (2007). "Policy expansion of school choice in the American states." *Peabody Journal of Education*, 82(2-3), 440-472.



Decision-making in Interest Groups ...
(Martinez, continued from Page 1)

Among Hispanic organizations, NCLR and LULAC are recognized as the leaders in the Hispanic community. At NCLR's 2005 conference, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton remarked that "NCLR has for forty years been a strong voice insisting that the American dream knows no boundaries of language, color or national origin." In 2007, both Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama spoke to thousands of attendees. The chairmen of the Democratic and Republican national committees attended LULAC's 2005 national convention in an effort to court the members of the country's oldest Latino organization. In 2007 the convention drew 14,000 attendees.

Though there are a few other national level Hispanic organizations (the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund has a long history of legal campaigns on behalf of Hispanics), this study focuses on NCLR and LULAC, the only two that have significant grassroots memberships and a strong presence in Washington. In the arena of education reform, their agendas are considerably different. Why did NCLR, a decades-old Hispanic civil rights organization, launch an aggressive campaign to support charter schools but LULAC, the oldest Hispanic advocacy group, maintain a neutral if not hostile stance? The move to charter schools during the 1990s marked a dramatic shift away from the conventional civil rights agenda, and among national Hispanic organizations, it was a shift that only NCLR took. The endorsement of NCLR--given its history in the civil rights movement--was a welcome surprise to many conservatives but a confirmation for some liberals that NCLR was ideologically bankrupt. By contrast, LULAC continues to oppose charter schools.

Preliminary research conducted for this study suggested that members play a key role in the decision-making process; at NCLR, they appear to have pushed NCLR in a direction they would not

likely have moved in otherwise. As former President Raul Yzaguirre recalls:

I've always been a fan of charter schools, but to be completely honest, not everyone on our staff and board was sold on the idea. However, one day we looked up and recognized that whether we had planned it or not, charter schools were popping up throughout our network. By 1999, we had a dozen charter schools in our affiliate network, and it seemed like everywhere I went affiliates were talking about starting up a charter school. (R. Yzaguirre, Speech to Texas Charter School Resource Center, February, 2002)

LULAC's position on charter schools also initially appeared driven by member interests. LULAC Executive Director Brent Wilkes says that LULAC members who make up the councils, many of whom are teachers, see charters as a threat to the public school system.

Puzzling over Goal Formation: The Research Questions

How these organizations make agenda setting decisions provides an indication of who they represent. Are they representing a narrow band of community-based organizations, their members, or are they attempting to represent the interests of the larger Hispanic community? Some might surmise based on the above that, rather than representing broader Hispanic community concerns, the major national organizations are in fact responding to the particular needs of their membership. Others would suggest that the Hispanic community is so diverse that it is only possible to represent subsets of the population. This is the puzzle this study sought to solve: Do the largest and oldest Hispanic civil rights organizations pursue only those policy alternatives that benefit their particular memberships or is membership only one factor in a more complicated goal formation process? How are decisions of this kind made, and what are the key influences? How can the varied responses to charter schools at these two national Hispanic civil rights organizations be explained?

Using case study methodology, internal document review, and interviews with the past and present leadership past of both organizations (35 interviews conducted), this study explains goal formation in nationally prominent Hispanic interest groups—a neglected area of research. The empirical puzzle results from the varied responses to charter schools at two of the leading Hispanic civil rights organizations, NCLR and LULAC. My findings contradict a number of earlier theorists (Marquez, 2003; Moe, 1980; Ortiz, 1991) who suggest that goal formation is purely a result of one variable, such as the desires of funders or members. In fact, the goal formation process is complex and changing; multiple actors have influence and the strategies and processes evolve as the organizations mature over decades. This study found that placing three categories of actors (funders, leaders, and members) within the agenda setting framework developed by John Kingdon (1984) illuminates the goal formation process within interest groups.

Goal Formation within NCLR and LULAC

In a word, goal formation at LULAC and NCLR happens differently. At NCLR, the calculus includes NCLR's desire to influence national level policy making, extensive use of research and analysis to inform their decision-making, and an analysis of the external political environment, including not only the views of their members but also the desires (as understood through polling) and needs (using statistical analysis) of the Hispanic population as a whole. LULAC has remained true to their roots, and the dominant force in their goal formation continues to be the will of their members at the local level. This is expressed through the annual elections and results in organizational leadership that tends to look inward for guidance rather than the external political environment.

Primary Influences on Policy Goal Formation in NCLR and LULAC

Of the five variables identified in Kingdon's agenda setting model which was revised for this study and the three categories of actors identified by previous research, only one – funders – was found to be of little consequence to goal formation. In both cases, favorable activity in all three streams – the problem

stream, the policy stream, and the politics stream – were necessary for the successful opening of a window of opportunity (consideration and endorsement of a policy alternative). Further, the presence of a policy entrepreneur was necessary to move a policy alternative to implementation. Finally, leaders and, particularly, members were influential in the goal formation process.

Applicability of Three Theories of Interest Group Behavior to the Study of Goal Formation

Terry Moe (1980) suggests that member preferences drive decision-making, Marquez (2003) finds that funders heavily influence group behavior, and Ortiz (1991) finds that leaders make decisions based on their interest in organizational survival and career advancement. This study found that no one group drives the goal formation process, but that differences in organizational structure impacts the influence of any particular group of actors. While in neither case did members control decision-making, it is certainly true that LULAC’s general membership strongly influenced leadership’s ability to pursue policy alternatives. At NCLR, only key members seemed to exert considerable influence. The decision-making of leaders at LULAC may well have been influenced by the desire of leadership to appeal to their voting membership so that leaders can continue winning elections. As a result they may make decisions that will ensure voter satisfaction at the general assembly and are constrained in their ability to make policy changes that are not already acceptable to the membership. In the case of NCLR, the organizational culture allows for longevity in staffing. As a result, staff are less concerned with personal career survival and more interested in larger policy questions. Finally, funders appear to have little or no influence in goal formation within either organization.

Insights into the Goal Formation Puzzle: Contributions to Theory and Practice

This study makes several contributions. First, Kingdon’s model clearly has applications to the study of interest groups. Second, this study moves the empirical analysis of interest groups forward, building on Rothenberg’s (1992) Common Cause study and largely confirming the neopluralist

approach offered by Lowery and Gray (2004). Third, the model developed here has practical value to interest groups interested in understanding their internal goal formation process.

Rothenberg concluded, as I have, that only a thorough investigation of an interest group that takes multiple contextual factors into account can provide sufficient information to explain interest group behavior. This is also consistent with the neopluralist approach. This explains why other studies have been able to attribute behavior solely to member preferences, funders’ desires, or leaders’ priorities. A limited study of only one aspect of an organization (and looking solely at one organization) will not produce a sufficiently robust analysis. As found in this study of LULAC and NCLR, attributing behavior to one actor misses a great deal, and much is gained by considering more than one organization.

While the neopluralist approach advanced by Lowery and Gray certainly supports this view, their view of the stages required for organized interests to influence policy outcomes curiously misses the goal formation stage. My analysis identifies this stage as one of critical importance. Studying the goal formation stage contributes enormously to an understanding of the reasons an organization takes the actions that it does in other stages.

In addition to moving interest group research forward, this study also has practical applications. Interest groups would benefit from applying the interest group goal formation model developed in this study to their decision-making. This study clearly identified the benefits and liabilities inherent in the different decision-making models employed by NCLR and LULAC. In the case of NCLR, it is possible that the policy entrepreneur has too much influence, which may lead to policy decisions that are not in the best interests of the organization or the membership as a whole. In the case of charter schools it is certainly true that only the most established and sophisticated affiliates were able to take advantage of the opportunity presented by NCLR’s entry into the charter school arena.

Limited resources within the programs arm of the organization resulted in a programs office that was

heavily focused on charter schools, leaving very little to offer affiliates who were not in a position to start a charter school. At LULAC, decisions are based heavily on member preferences. While this democratic process certainly has its advantages, the organization might be better served if they were able to factor in the external political environment and an analysis of all policy alternatives. These examples show the benefit to any interest group of using the interest group goal formation model to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their decision-making process.

NCLR and LULAC have evolved in the decades since they were started by dedicated individuals. LULAC, born in the 1920s as a middle class organization and focused on acceptance into the American mainstream, was influenced by the Chicano and civil rights movement in the 1970s and continues to behave in many ways like a classic civil rights organization. NCLR, started in the Southwest, was originally intended to provide technical support to local groups but quickly set their sights on Washington. Under new leadership they appear to be rededicating themselves to local groups while maintaining their place at the national negotiating table.

At this point in time, however, the answer to the main question posed by this study remains complicated. The national organizations studied here both state in their mission their desire to improve the well-being of all Hispanics. As currently structured, LULAC is more able to address the needs and concerns of its own membership, but is less able to take policy positions that may benefit the larger Hispanic community if their membership is not willing. NCLR, with looser ties to members, uses policy analysis to develop positions that they believe advance the well-being of Hispanics. Their positions however are often not popular at the grassroots, where NCLR is perceived by some as too willing to compromise. How these groups continue to evolve will be interesting to watch, and if successful, NCLR and LULAC will help us as a nation understand and respond to the needs of a large and growing part of our population.

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PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

KATHRYN A. MCDERMOTT
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS

The Publications Committee is pleased to announce that the 2009 PEA Yearbook will be *The Politics of Advocacy in Education*, co-edited by Janelle Scott (NYU), Christopher Lubienski (University of Illinois) and Elizabeth DeBray-Pelot (University of Georgia).

At the PEA Business Meeting in Chicago, the membership discussed shifting the PEA-sponsored issues of the Peabody Journal of Education from the current system, in which an editor or editors produce an entire issue on a single theme, to a format more like a free-standing PEA journal with an editorial board and a call for submission of article manuscripts for peer review. In order to allow more time for the selection of an editorial board, the Committee has also decided to postpone this change until 2009, when we will be beginning

preparation of the 2011 PEA issue of the Peabody Journal.

The 2009 PEA issue of the Peabody Journal of Education will be *The New Politics of Educational Leadership*, co-edited by Dorothy Shipps and Judith Kafka of Baruch College, City University of New York.

NEW DISSERTATION AWARDS COMMITTEE SEEKS NOMINATIONS

A newly constituted PEA Dissertation Awards Committee is seeking nominations for the Outstanding Dissertation in the Politics of Education for 2007. This year's competition is for dissertations successfully defended between June 30 2006 and July 1 2007. The deadline for nominations is **November 15, 2007**. The winner(s) will receive a \$250 token award and one year's free membership to the PEA in addition to being honored at the 2008 PEA business meeting at AERA in New York City.

The Outstanding Dissertation Award is designed to foster and support graduate student research and publication on political processes and outcomes in organized education grades preK-16, from the United States and abroad. One aim is to highlight and reward scholars studying political issues in education, as distinct from the interdisciplinary approaches taken by policy studies.

The Committee welcomes any nominated dissertation that addresses the politics of education, including, but not limited to, those that focus on questions of democracy, voice, governance, inequality/equality, power, authority, political accountability, interest group interactions, coalitions and agency at any level of analysis (federal/national, state/provincial, local). Acceptable methods include, but are not limited to, comparative political analysis, case-study analyses of broad trends and reform efforts, qualitative

studies, political history and biography, primary and secondary data analysis.

Nominations require two simple forms and a four-to-six page (1200 word maximum) dissertation abstract. The two forms are 1) a nomination form from the scholar's dissertation sponsor (which has space for a required assessment of the dissertation's contribution to the politics of education) and 2) a scholar application form, to be completed by the dissertation's author. Forms are downloaded, filled out and emailed to Dorothy Shipps at shipps@mac.com. Both forms and this year's call for nominations are available on the PEA website: http://www.fsu.edu/~pea/award_diss_description.html

The dissertation abstract is longer than requested in years past, so some explanation is in order: The entire committee evaluates each nomination packet, paying special attention to the abstract. We are seeking a clear understanding of the dissertation's topic and conceptual approach, the data collection procedures and methods used, as well as findings and conclusions. By increasing the word limit, we hope to encourage more detailed descriptions, and enhance each applicant's ability to convey the key strengths of his or her dissertation. Abstracts, coupled with the sponsor's assessment of the dissertation's contributions, form the basis for our selection of finalists. The entire dissertation is read to select the winner(s).

We encourage as many applications from each sponsor as meet the guidelines, so please nominate your students, and encourage your colleagues to do so as well. If you have questions, feel free to contact the committee chair Dorothy Shipps, CUNY (shipps@mac.com).

Dissertation Awards Committee members:

Dorothy Shipps, Chair, City University of New York, Baruch College
Betty Malen, University of Maryland
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Erik C. Ness, University of Pittsburgh
Lorraine McDonnell, University of California, Santa Barbara



Education Advocacy in Washington...

(Sroufe, continued from Page 1)

During this more recent period, education policy issues have become increasingly contentious because they have become important in both ideological terms and in terms of real substance. One way of appreciating the difference is to consider the tone of *A Nation At Risk* (1983), a report heavy on admonition, but with no inclination to call for accountability measures with teeth, and the report of the Committee on No Child Left Behind, titled *Beyond NCLB* (2007), which seeks to use the large number of accountability requirements in NCLB to further a reform agenda. The *Nation at Risk* report made much use of the “should” word: “Master teachers should be involved in designing teacher preparation programs and in supervising teachers during their probationary years.” This is familiar blue-ribbon panel speak, but consider the degree of specificity in *Beyond NCLB*, which makes 75 recommendations along the lines of: “require all N sizes for purposes of calculating AYP to be no larger than 20.” Because the stakes associated with education policy have become higher, the number of advocates inside and outside the government has increased, as has their forcefulness and sophistication in putting forward their education policy agendas.

Some Aspects of the New Context for Policy Making

Zero Sum Game. Readers of *Education Week* will find nothing startling in the preceding comment about the current policy environment being characterized by high stakes and contentiousness. Nonetheless, high stakes and contentious behavior remain the most salient fact about policy making in Washington at the present. When Jack Jennings retired from the Congress after 25 years as a key staff member he was asked what had been the most notable change over that period. His answer: the incredible increase in partisanship.

There are some other aspects of the federal policy arena that may be less obvious to at least some readers. One is that federal education policy is a zero sum game. It may be theoretically true, as President Kennedy argued that “a rising tide lifts all boats”, but such a tide has not been seen in education politics in the past 20 years. A more accurate analogy might be that the winds of change disturb all the leaves, but some end up in larger piles than others, and there are only so many to move about. Currently, resources for domestic programs must compete for resources against national defense and homeland security programs, the latter being untouchable in terms of resource allocations. Domestic agencies such as National Science Foundation and United State Department of Education compete for resources for very similar science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs. Even within a department, programs must compete with one another for resources (e.g., IDEA programs compete with Pell Grants, and IES competes with the Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development for resources and influence with the Secretary).

Many, Many Voices. Others have correctly observed that there has been a noticeable increase in the number of generally conservative groups seeking to influence education policy, often through support of think tanks. However, there has also been an increase in the number of liberal or moderate think tanks (e.g., Education Sector, Center for American Progress, Center on Education Policy, New America Foundation, Alliance for Excellence in Education) that are perhaps less well known and that did not exist even ten years ago. The myriad of Washington-based groups capable of launching a report, press conference, website, or legislative program are relatively recent phenomena. It is literally the case that there is an education advocacy activity of some type underway in the vicinity of the Capitol at most waking hours of every day, resulting in a veritable Tower of Babel from the standpoint of policy makers, and calling for ever increasing sophistication on the part of policy advocates seeking to be heard.

One consequence of the number of new voices is the changing degree of influence among advocates. The Congressional Research Service, for example, no longer has a monopoly on policy relevant research and, indeed, many members of Congress now prefer to receive information from liberal or conservative think tanks in keeping with their core values. The very objective and intentionally bi-partisan Office of Technology Assessment is no more; the National Academy of Sciences is now considered just one of many authoritative perspectives by policy makers. Similarly, the rather staid voices of foundations and associations most familiar to older members of the PEA, largely based on the East Coast, have been outpaced in terms of influence by newer, wealthier foundations in the West and the organizations and programs they prefer to fund.

White House Rules. One question on the new citizenship exam for immigrants is about the role of the cabinet in the United States. The correct answer posited by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) is that “the cabinet serves to advise the president”. This, of course, is folly, as was humorously described in Robert Reich’s book *Locked in the Cabinet*. In George W. Bush’s administration, education policy has been determined exclusively by the White House and White House advisors, not by cabinet officers. This was true in the Reagan administration (see *13th Man*) and Clinton Administrations, but not to the same degree. Margaret Spelling has considerable autonomy as Secretary of Education, but she is essentially implementing programs and policies she designed while working in the White House as an education advisor.

Small Town within Mass Society. In many respects Washington is a cosmopolitan urban center – a hub of the political and communications industry. However, in the world of education policymaking, it more closely resembles a small town where everybody knows your name. This is largely because many actually never leave Washington, but move through the policy chairs. For example, a Republican staffer, Beth Buelmann, served on the House Education Committee, then moved to the

U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and is now working for the Senate Education Committee. Alex Nock worked for the House committee under Democrat Dale Kildee, then directed the bi-partisan study and recommendations of NCLB, and now works for the majority in the House Education Committee. This familiar pattern is not limited to those working on the Hill. Advocacy groups also experience the circular movement of folks: Sharon Robinson, for example, has worked for the NEA, the USDE, ETS, and is now the President of AACTE. Mike Cohen worked at NIE, NASBE, NGA, USDE, the Clinton White House, and is now President of Achieve. Disney is correct, “It is a small (policy) world, after all.”

Federal Education Research Advocacy

Education research as a federal policy issue has experienced several promising start-ups, but none have resulted in a sustained program along the lines of the medical research institutes within the National Institutes of Health. Perhaps the best opportunity was the creation of the National Institute for Education (NIE) in 1970 – a presidential initiative with bipartisan support. However, as reported in *Organizing an Anarchy*, NIE never really had much of an opportunity. There have been two authorizations of OERI, leading to the current federal research program, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). Commenting on an optimistically far-reaching AERA proposal for the reauthorization of the federal research programs a few years ago, Thomas Glennan, the first director of NIE, observed: “remember, education research is the leaf on the wave, not the wave.”

Some would argue that education research is now front and center because of the mandates for the use of scientifically based research in NCLB and the obvious vigor of the IES. Others would observe that there has been no increase in appropriations for education research and that the agency’s principal legislative sponsor, Rep. Mike Castle (R-DE), declined to authorize a robust appropriation level until the agency “had proved itself.” Operating at

its present level of funding IES is unlikely to prove itself to Congress.

The constraints on advocacy that one may have identified in the previous discussion impact education research just as they do other federal programs, especially with regard to the multiplication of voices seeking to influence outcomes in a zero sum game. Nonetheless, there will be an opportunity to improve the state of federal education research programs in the near future (perhaps the coming year) when IES is reauthorized. There are high stakes involved even here and PEA members should work to assure maximum independence for the programs of education research and statistics in the reauthorization. It is commendable that IES has achieved sufficient independence to issue evaluation reports critical of the D.C. voucher program, charter schools, and the use of highly touted software programs – all favorites of the administration. It is not accidental that this degree of autonomy has been achieved, maintained, and used. The reauthorization should strive to create a situation where Russ Whitehurst’s successors will be assured similar independence from partisan and ideological forces.

One Constant

Steady Work (1988) was the excellent title of a wise monograph about school reform. The book issued a call for heightened rationality and thoughtfulness in the policy-practice arena and offered suggestions for how one might learn from the reform efforts of the past. What seems new in the present context is that only a few stalwarts continue to see the

education policy process as readily susceptible to knowledge and experience, and many key actors view policy development primarily in terms of political or ideological consequences. One hopes this is a passing phenomenon. Whether it is or not, the work of federal education policy formulation, analysis, and evaluation will continue. PEA members have, after all, steady work.

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Membership Benefits

PEA membership provides members with an electronic PEA Bulletin (the Association's newsletter), recent publications, and information about upcoming conferences, books, articles, and events related to politics of education. Members also receive the special double issue of *Educational Policy* (January/March) which serves as the annual yearbook of the Politics of Education Association.

Current and New Members

Since the Politics of Education Association is now a special interest group (SIG) of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), you can join PEA when applying for a new AERA membership or renewing your AERA membership.

If it is not time to renew your AERA membership or you do not wish to be a member of AERA, then you can still join or renew your PEA membership by filling out the membership application on the next page. Send it with a check in the amount of \$30 payable to the **Politics of Education Association** to Tamara Young at the following address:

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The Politics of Education Association (PEA) was formed in 1969 as the Politics of Education Society. In 1978, it became the Politics of Education Association, as part of AERA. Interest in educational policy and politics expanded so that in 1987, the Association successfully called for the formation of a new division within the American Educational Research Association. Today, that division is known as Division L: Policy and Politics.

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Kenneth Wong (2002-2004) Vanderbilt University (currently at Brown University)
Hanne Mawhinney (2000-2002) University of Maryland, College Park
William Firestone (1998-2000) Rutgers University
Jane Clark Lindle: (1996-1998) University of Kentucky (currently at Clemson University)
Robert Wimpelberg (1994-1996) University of New Orleans (now University of Houston)
Betty Malen (1992-1994) University of Washington (now University of Maryland, College Park)
Catherine Marshall (1990-1992) Vanderbilt University (currently at University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill)
William L. Boyd (1990-1992) Pennsylvania State University
William Lowe Boyd (1988-1990) Pennsylvania State University
Michael Kirst (1986-1988) Stanford University
Jay D. Scribner (1984-1986) Temple University (now University of Texas-Austin)
Douglas Mitchell (1982-1984) University of California, Riverside
James G. Cibulka (1980-1982) University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (currently at the University of Kentucky)

Past Chairs of PEA

Donald H. Layton (1978-1980) SUNY-Albany
David K. Wiles (1976-1978) Miami University (later SUNY at Albany)
David K. Wiles (1975-1976) Miami University (later SUNY at Albany) (completed LaNoue's 1st term)
George LaNoue (1974-1975 -- stepped down after one year) Teachers College (currently at University of Maryland, Baltimore County)
Michael W. Kirst (1972-1974) Stanford University
Mike M. Milstein (1970-1972) SUNY-Buffalo (later University of New Mexico)
David L. Colton (First President; 1969-1970) Washington University; (retired from University of New Mexico)