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Review of Ideology and Educational Reform: Themes and Theories in Public Education, by David C. Paris

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tant clues to the meaning of the election and the interpretation of the results.

In the book's conclusion, Craig Allen Smith summarizes the book by emphasizing the struggle for "interpretive dominance." Campaign actors fight to define the story of the election. Bush lost the communications advantage of incumbency; Clinton combined effective communications strategy with vision and style; Perot exceeded the odds against independent candidates by broadcasting effective ads and infomercials grounded in fundamental values.

Smith makes the important point at a normative level that the struggle over access to media agenda-setting now is one of our country's most pressing communications problems. Many interests are marginalized and not able to play the interpretive game. In a policymaking system placing great emphasis on interpretation and negotiation among leading actors, the fact that many segments are not well organized or well represented creates a structural bias in the newsmaking system. The recent wave of media mergers makes such imbalance even more of a problem today.

This book is well written and filled with accessible case studies of communications problems in the 1992 presidential campaign. It makes the important point that communications is an interactive fight among candidates, journalists, and the public. I recommend it to everyone interested in better understanding mass communications and election campaigns.

Ideology and Educational Reform: Themes and Theories in Public Education. By David C. Paris. Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995. 220p. \$49.95 cloth, \$18.95 paper.

Stephen G. Salkever, *Bryn Mawr College*

David Paris has written a remarkable and eminently readable book that will interest a wide variety of political scientists. In it he manages in the space of a little over 200 pages to address with striking depth and accessibility two questions: the contemporary controversy over public education in the United States and the question of how political theory or philosophy should be related to political practice. This is thus simultaneously a book about public schooling in America and about how best to think about such schooling; its point of departure is Paris's claim that the two questions are linked.

One hidden reason educational reform has been so difficult to achieve, he argues, is that as citizens and as policy analysts we do not sufficiently recognize that we want a number of different and often incompatible things from schools. As a result of this plurality of views, solving the problem of schools cannot be simply a matter of finding the right means to an end we all share, as most nonphilosophical policy analysts imagine. But neither is it possible or desirable, as professional philosophers of a Rawlsian bent generally assume, to transcend this plurality by articulating a basis for consensus on a substantive principle or an idealized decision-making procedure as a prelude to formulating policy. The fact that different citizens understand the goals of education differently is not a perplexity peculiar to education policy; it is a difficulty, but not a pathological one, since it is an inevitable condition of genuinely liberal democratic politics. As Paris understands it, political philosophy and political science generally should resist in such situations the temptation to oversimplify practical choices by seeking a single cause or small set of principles that is the source or solution: "Instead of attempting to avoid the plurality and conflict of goals, the suggestion here is to

expect them, clearly display them, and examine the ways institutions deal with them" (p. 13).

Paris's clarification involves a careful review of many kinds of recent American discourse about the aims of education. His novel and promising approach to this task is to identify several distinct and sometimes conflicting themes, ways of imagining and talking about the role of schools in American society: "A theme might be thought of as a perspective, a way of viewing and thinking about the schools. It provides a more or less coherent way of organizing or knitting together the various values and goals relevant to a policy area" (p. 49). According to Paris, since the mid-1980s three such educational themes have been prominent: the "new common school theme," which concentrates on the appropriate intellectual and moral traits American public schools should form; the "human capital" theme, which emphasizes the way schools prepare students for economic roles; and what Paris names the "clientelism" theme, embracing a variety of new ways of proposing that public schools should serve the needs of their various clients. These themes are analytically separable but are often merged in practice, with the result that very different goals are grouped together under a single heading (like "quality education") as if they were the same. Paris believes that by identifying these differences and by suggesting a general strategy for dealing with them he can help people develop strategies that can work best in particular local contexts. His third theme, "clientelism," is a particularly interesting result of his analysis, since it brings together such ideological antagonists as the conservative "choice" movement and liberal programs that redefine the mission of public schools to include provision of a broad range of welfare services to children and families in poor communities. Each theme, in fact, has liberal and conservative variants, underscoring Paris's contention that *thematic* analysis shows how the unreflective use of ideological categories conceals the significance of various public policy proposals.

The book is divided into six chapters, the first introducing the dilemma of contemporary school reform and Paris's thematic approach to that dilemma, and the sixth making some proposals about the future of educational reform. Chapters 3 to 5 delineate the three themes, while chapter 2 sets the stage by criticizing the "theoretical mystique," the view that the task of theory is to attempt "to subordinate policy to principle and provide principles that can guide and serve as a basis for evaluating policy" (p. 40). His main targets here are John Rawls, Bruce Ackerman, and Amy Gutmann. Thematic analysis rests on a fundamentally different notion of political philosophy, one that maintains a strong evaluative and philosophical cast while drawing much closer to empirical political analysis: "It assumes that we must deal with an irreducible plurality of primary values, takes a different view of the nature of consensus and justification in a liberal democratic society, and places greater emphasis on political or institutional resolutions of conflicts between and among principles" (p. 43).

The central chapters on the three themes in educational policy combine examination of the empirical claims explicitly made by different proposals with philosophical analysis of what such proposals presuppose and imply about the tasks we think schools should carry out. Paris is particularly hard on the human capital theme, arguing that in terms of both macro- and microeconomic performance "the economic significance of the schools is often overstated . . . and what is valuable within it, both in theory and practice, is probably best understood in terms of other themes" (pp. 107-8). This is so because any effective policy to link public

education more closely with job performance would interfere with equal opportunity and the "second chance" aspect of American society. With respect to clientelism, he is concerned that both "welfare and choice proposals for the schools represent a further extension of the logic of individualism in defining educational aims" (p. 149). A pragmatist as well as a pluralist, Paris is suspicious of quick fixes (and especially sensitive to institutional and professional resistance to change in liberal democracies) but recognizes that contemporary schools provide many examples of successful coping with great difficulties.

Paris concludes by asking what we are to make of the current situation in which we see a number of local successes but no clear way of generalizing these to a national policy. His answer is deceptively low-key: Solutions must always be local in character if we are to respect the plurality of liberal democratic politics, but should all be guided by recognition of the presumptive priority of the new common school theme, given his arguments that "it is hard to make sense of the other aims of the schools . . . without putting them in this moral and civic context" (p. 195). Paris's theoretical proposal here yields no specific policy programs but can be very fruitful, as he shows in detail, in helping citizens and educators decide which parts of current school practice to keep and enhance and where new directions are called for.

What makes *Ideology and Educational Reform* uniquely valuable is that Paris brings to his subject detailed knowledge of both educational policy and political philosophy. The result is a work of unusual depth and texture that is more attentive to the problems and possibilities of schooling in America than more abstract theoretical works, and more reflective and wide-ranging than one-dimensional empirical studies. Much learning informs this work; Paris wears that learning lightly, perhaps too lightly. His approach both to education and to the relation of theory and practice are thoroughly Aristotelian, but the only hints of this are an epigraph to the chapter on the "theoretical mystique" and a footnote indicating that the intellectual excellence schools should teach is a virtue intertwined with virtues of character and thus is "*phronesis*, or practical wisdom" (p. 102, n. 41). Given the tendency among social scientists and policy-oriented theorists to assume that all usable philosophy was written in the twentieth century, Paris could have been more forthcoming about the theoretical background of his inquiry. I should also note that in general Paris's writing is clear, if not elegant, but sometimes overly schematic. Even with these minor reservations, this is a fine book. In addition to shedding important light on American schools and on contemporary practical philosophy, *Ideology and Educational Reform* deserves attention as a model for a discipline of political science aspiring to be theoretically informed and practically relevant social inquiry.

Health Care Politics and Policy in America. By Kant Patel and Mark E. Rushefsky. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1995. 290p. \$59.95 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

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Patel and Rushefsky's book is a comprehensive analysis of health care politics and policy in the United States. It is organized as a textbook, and that is meant as praise, rather than qualification. The ingredients of health care policy are exceedingly complex, and Patel and Rushefsky here examine a number of difficult issues in health care politics and

policy. They begin by describing the health policy environment: policy actors, economic resources, political ideology, institutional settings, and legal parameters. Placing each policy topic in historical context, the authors discuss issues in Medicaid/Medicare and other policy affecting the poor and disadvantaged, cost containment, technology, and potential reforms for the system. Issues of ethics and social justice are briefly addressed.

The authors lean on the insights of other scholars regarding the problem of health care policy rather than developing their own. Their major contribution is in organizing a text that provides a chronology of health policy in a historic, political, and economic setting and that lays out the arguments for and against various proposals. Given the complexities of health care economics and politics, this is no simple exercise. Both undergraduate and policy sophisticates looking for a quick review may benefit from reading commentary on health maintenance organizations (HMOs), health care insurance, or diagnostic-related groupings, for instance. They will find the basic arguments on both sides of particular policy initiatives. (One important policy topic not discussed is medical liability.) Each argument is well referenced.

The authors place health care politics in the context of budget politics. There is extensive discussion of how various Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Acts have affected access and costs. They also provide the ideological background for various policy options. Much of what is called American conservatism today is, of course, classical liberalism. Understanding that the critique from the right—the Heritage Foundation, for example—is grounded in classical liberal economics is essential to understanding the debate in health care. Patel and Rushefsky recognize this background and their discussion of the Heritage Foundation's proposals for substituting tax credits for tax deductible health premiums becomes all the more clear.

Health Care Politics and Policy in America is well documented, the authors having effectively mined journals and research reports. It is also comprehensive in its treatment of health care policy. But one does not find a consistent theme or a clear point of view running through the book, although the authors do seem to have more fondness for regulatory schemes than for free market solutions. Instead, the reader is briefed on the pros and cons of various policy issues. I particularly liked the discussion of HMOs and how they are being transformed by insurance company and hospital ownership, two institutions that have little interest in the cost-containment ability that supposedly characterizes HMOs. Intricate health care proposals are also explained with a clarity lacking in other volumes.

But when the authors turn to ethical issues in chapter 5, their attempts to conceptualize equality, equity, and social justice beg for more distinction than they provide. Moreover, readers will not find global proposals for health care reform in this volume. In chapter 8, "Reforming the System," the authors examine the history of health care reform, starting in the late 1970s. Their survey of the politics and eventual demise of individual proposals for health care reform is excellent. The authors are cautious, examining policy proposals piece by piece, without reaching conclusions regarding either cost containment or social equity. They reach sensible and familiar conclusions regarding the relationship between the American constitutional system and the difficulty of comprehensive health care reform. Whenever serious health care reform is proposed, health care interest groups mobilize to protect their interest. Insurance companies, hospitals, physician groups, small