Monitoring Policy Post-Implementation:
Rhetorical Chorus and the Limits of Opaque Policy Evaluation Frameworks

Nic Nusbaumer
George Mason University
English – Writing & Rhetoric

Abstract

This article presents an ontological discussion of the potential application of Julia Smith's (2014) concept of the rhetorical chorus to education policy implementation in an effort to integrate deliberative democratic practices. The article poses the question: by recognizing diffuse power dynamics and allocating more of that power to students-as-stakeholders, can we reduce policy incongruence and produce better outcomes ecologies? In response, I review policy implementation and institution-student power relations by invoking Jonathan E. Collins' recent work on deliberative democracy and Foucault's discourse on power relations and truth. Next, I borrow the concept of the rhetorical chorus from Writing and Rhetoric to delineate a plausible framework for positioning students as principal agents who can provide education policy implementation feedback where gaps currently exist. A proposed case study of the 2021 housing protests at federally chartered and renowned HBCU, Howard University, is included to highlight 1) tenable issues in the gap between implementation and evaluation, and 2) how students are positioned as diffuse, exterior agents regarding the provision of feedback on the policies they embody.

Keywords: rhetorical theory, education policy, education reform, student advocacy, HBCU

Introduction

Education policymaking hybridizes and institutionalizes many of the concerns found on major policy dockets: taxation, housing, civic duty, national and local values, political trends, systems of accountability, and more. Public education is the only policy area with its own governing institutions–school boards–that focus solely on making policy (Collins). While the implementation of educational policies has encouraged further discourse between scholars and policymakers, the public–children, teens, their guardians, and taxpayers–is bereft of such interiority and agency over the policies that directly affect their livelihoods. How is it that policies can leave people behind? The short answer: they do not.

Generally, policy implementation occurs at the end of the adjudication, consideration, and formalization of policy—usually long after the outsets of issues, concerns, and narratives are embodied by those whom the policy will affect. And, once implemented, intermediaries at various stages in delivery–state agencies, local districts, or school staff–interpret and integrate education policy differently (Hamann and Lane). Rather than immobilize inevitable group formation and interests, I suggest we mobilize the *right* groups to provide data and feedback regarding policy implementation: those experiencing education policy first and first-hand: namely, students, teachers, and school staff. This mobilization requires that typically hierarchical evaluative frameworks are revised to position the above groups either higher or more horizontally relative to policymakers and district leaders typically positioned at the "top."

I aim to present an ontological discussion on the potential for a rhetorical chorus of education policy implementation in order to ask: by accepting diffuse power dynamics and allocating more of that power to students-as-stakeholders, can we reduce policy incongruence and produce better outcomes ecologies? In this paper, I will review policy implementation and institution-student

power relations by invoking Jonathan E. Collins' recent work on deliberative democracy and Foucault's discourse on power relations and truth. Next, I will borrow the concept of the rhetorical chorus from Writing and Rhetoric to delineate a plausible framework for positioning students as principal agents who can provide education policy implementation feedback where gaps currently exist. A proposed case study of the 2021 housing protests at federally chartered and renowned HBCU, Howard University, is included to highlight 1) tenable issues in the gap between implementation and evaluation, and 2) how students are positioned as diffuse, exterior agents regarding the provision of feedback on the policies they embody.

Issues Following Up on Implementation

> *"While in the past reformers tried to change culture without changing policy, now they are trying to change policy without changing culture."*
>
> Frederick M. Hess

In their introduction to *The American Dream and the Public Schools*, Hochschild and Scovronick (2003) assert that irrational policymaking choices are made at least partly on the basis that "pursuing collective goals of the American dream could endanger or has endangered the individual achievement of privileged children" (4). The frameworks that guide policy from ideation to agenda to implementation, then, reasonably but often erroneously prioritize two things: the composition of policy (Viennet and Pont; Cerna) and the feedback its implementation garners after some period (Haddad and Demsky; Winstone et al.). Viennet and Pont (2017) note in their review of policy implementation literature that there is little emphasis on 1) documenting reform impact and 2) the efficacy of education reform–due to the challenges associated with assessing the data collected– all of which provides exigence for studying implementation processes.

Policy outcomes take time to appear and analyze for causation. However, "education policy implementation" is not monolithic: policymakers need to deliver policies to districts, while educators and students embody everyday practices informed by those policies (Viennet and Pont 9). In his "Theorizing Failure in US Writing Assignments," Asao B. Inoue (2014) posits that assessment data are prefabricated by standardized assessment structures before students actually undergo examination; thus, assessment structures–not students–require fundamental change to produce what he calls "productive failure." (344). Once implemented, advocates and groups often declare policy decisions as definitive wins rather than processes to be monitored; this makes the praxis and experience of policy implementation "somebody else's problem" (Hess, 2013). Inoue's theorization of failure aligns with Hess (2013), in that accountability is diffuse once systematized. Given that policies are developed through contextual cycles of influence, text production, and praxis (Bell and Stevenson 147), policy implementation is often not linear even if plans and agendas are. The need for documentation across contexts and revisions is, in large part, the reason for invoking Smith's rhetorical chorus as a framework for monitoring policy.

Because individuals with vested interests are more likely to be in groups, and those interest groups are more likely to achieve favorable election outcomes (Anzia); and because exposing individuals to direct civil participation and public deliberation–deliberative democracy–leads to increased trust in local officials and higher meeting attendance (Collins), we can here posit that current issues in education policy implementation are misaligned with democratic ideals of civic participation and inclusion for the sake of diversification rather than standardization. These issues are amplified when we consider, too, the neglect of policy follow-up protocols. The substitute for malleable feedback measures is inflexible frameworks that tend to overlook feedback from the people who embody policy outcomes.

Students are a population of individuals and groups with vested interest in their individual and collective success, irrespective of the many student groups and affiliations that further demonstrate their ethos as potential agents in policy implementation. In communication and dialogic models of feedback, as opposed to information transmission (i.e., one-way feedback channels) models "positioning students as active participants in the process, [helps us recognize] that students' active role is a necessary prerequisite for feedback to have any impact on student learning . . . the importance of internally generated feedback, rather than the primacy of teacher comments, has gained prominence" (Winstone et al. 3). With all of these considerations in mind, I propose that we should turn our focus to why and how students are positioned in feedback systems and the ways in which diffuse power dynamics affect their discursive agency and mobility.

Illusory, Nondeliberative Democracy: Hierarchical Feedback

We need not await election cycles to encourage internal, informed groups–like students, who are usually positioned at the ends and bottoms of feedback channels–to monitor education policy implementation at least partially. Few recent studies have focused on the role of educational institutions when studying meeting participation, likely the only environments where policymakers and the public interact, even if passively or hierarchically (Collins). Given low off-cycle election turnout, interest groups' success in off-cycle elections, and relatively low poll success among unaffiliated voters (Moe; Anzia), as well as the gap between policy implementation and localized response I explore in this paper, I agree with Collins' (2021) view that public proceedings–like school and district board meetings–are illusory, ostensible of democracy–"events where a select few show up to fight for narrow specialized group interests,

even at the expense of a greater good" (2). We can be certain that democracy exists, is material, and is embodied, especially through policy systems. Thus, I'd like to preface with two remarks. First, I do not intend to argue for destroying or deconstructing democracy; rather, I hope to show democratic spaces are often populated with unrepresentative interest groups who distill the democratic process to a performance. As Collins says:

> In reality, local public meetings often operate far below the imagined ideal . . . the majority sit at home, disinterested in the affairs of local government. From this outlook, one could very much argue that local public meetings are actually illusions of democracy. (Collins 2)

While democratic processes are systematized, their application often serves interest groups who are positioned to have space, time, and agency to organize around relevant issues. We are also aware that teachers are more likely to vote in elections because they have occupational self-interest (Moe). Granting and reproducing similar agency to students is vital, especially when their concerns are on or comprise much of the agenda.

Second, students frequently and sometimes formally evaluate and assess teaching, policy, and the institutions to which they enroll (Comer), yet no focused research has been conducted on student involvement in writing program administration (WPA). In fact, of the 234 major articles published in *WPA: Writing Program Administration* during the past two decades, only 42 articles (18%) refer explicitly to possible or actual undergraduate-student involvement in WPA work (Comer). More broadly, Harrington et al. encourage WPAs to better engage students-as-stakeholders because they help sustain our programmatic growth and sustain necessary discourse on institutional power relations. While WPA work and broader systems of education policy and implementation are certainly distinct, they both aim to enact and respond to "site-specific

measures for the assessment and evaluation" of program and policy effectiveness. In other words, WPA work is a material and observable site of policy uptake, embodiment, and effect from which more research can be forwarded. Therefore, it is imperative to productively disrupt traditional systems of education policy implementation: rather than await off-cycle elections or rely on opaque town halls, students can be positioned as embodied and interior stakeholders in the policies that affect their opportunities, livelihoods, and understanding of democracy.

We accept that early-life educational interventions, like that of Head Start programs, are only effective if followed up with quality investments later in children's lives (Johnson). Long-term data collection includes short-term starting points. More responsive, democratic feedback loops are needed to ensure education policy implementation results in favorable student learning outcomes. To monitor policy implementation more effectively, viewing policy decisions as continuous "moves" in multidisciplinary discourses may identify these primarily text-based artifacts (policy) as entry points for embodied, deliberative public participation from on-the-ground agents who can provide feedback and inputs even in the initial stages of implementation. By applying features of Julia Smith's (2014) rhetorical chorus, students can be positioned as primary feedback agents who willingly contribute to this discourse as vested stakeholders, but only if institutional frameworks and principal agents provide the means by adjusting feedback systems. The rhetorical chorus, when integrated alongside Collins' work on deliberative democracy, provides a material and data-producing, qualitative framework for implementing and revising education policy with its primary stakeholders in mind.

Agents Monitoring Principals Monitoring Policy Implementation: Analyzing Howard University's 2021 Housing Protests

> *Black people are not discriminated against because some speak a variety of [African American Vernacular English]—rather, I argue, [AAVE] is stigmatized because it is*

> *spoken primarily by Black people. It is its association with a particular people and history that has compelled people to stigmatize it. Our attitudes toward language, it appears, are often steeped in our assumptions about the bodies of the speakers. We assume an essential connection—language as inherently tied to the body. In other words, language varieties—like people—are subject to racialization.*
>
> Laura Greenfield, 2003

From October to November 2021, undergraduates at Washington, D.C.'s renowned HBCU, Howard University, protested poor on-campus housing conditions, including mold in 38 of 2,700 dorm rooms and rodent infestations (Richardson and Phillips). On October 12, 2021, students began occupying Blackburn University Center. Twenty days later, a confidential agreement was reached to help resolve many student concerns. However, many mediating agents–students, university administration, university president Wayne A.I. Frederick, the university's media team, the NAACP, student organizations, the Howard Forward Initiative–made marks on the discourse that led to that eventual resolution.

Howard students demanded "a detailed housing plan, legal and disciplinary immunity for students involved in the demonstration and the reinstatement of affiliate board positions that the university removed over the summer" (Richardson and Phillips), materialized a protest, and were met with a confidentiality clause that prevents the kind of interiority required for a rhetorical chorus to perform and rehearse effectively. Such actions demonstrate Howard students' heuristic and rhetorical flexibility to organize and produce material discourses that critically approach the issues that affect their community; is this not an excellent mark of student agency and a product of pedagogies that facilitate outreach and advocacy?

Moreover, Howard administration's lack of transparency is misaligned with Collins' argument for deliberative democracy. Yes, a resolution was reached, but appeals to institutional systems usurped accountability and transparency. An analysis of the documents and artifacts that *are* publicly available–the Howard Forward initiative, various media reports, and discourse from

principals and agents alike–can help trace incongruities from policy to implementation to embodiment and back to what is commonly called "the top." The advocacy described in this section is no accident; we can trace it back to Howard's liberatory, policy-centered sensibility imparted by professors poised to produce what Zachary R. Williams (2010) describes as "the scholar activist, who individually and collectively popularized and pioneered original and unique forms of [Black scholarship]" (4). Again, it is less violent, more feasible, and immediately impactful to reshape democracy rather than devote decades to fundamentally replacing it.

Howard University's student protests culminate policy concerns that can be found on many education policy agendas: taxation, housing, education outcomes, and institutional interests. Because we know Howard undergraduates were able to voice dissent in the form of protests to secure a deal with the university's administration, it is a useful policy case study as it involves institutional interests, a documentation of policy, policy revisions, and feedback–both embodied (student well-being) and material (condition of dorm units on campus). As the narrative occurs over time, integrates various policy decisions, and because the contextual levels of policy adaptation can be observed through various public documentation, employing the rhetorical chorus framework can help trace the many moves that culminate in Howard University's deferral to institutional opacity to reconcile a public and deliberative policy issue.

In the president's campus address regarding the protests, the focus is on the disruption (the purpose of such a protest) caused by protesting students rather than their demands:

> There are many unintended consequences caused by the occupation of the Blackburn Center. The cafeteria has been closed, and as a result, our campus partner Sodexo has been forced to begin laying off some employees. People who work hard to serve our campus are hurting. Students have not been able to fully use their meal plans over the last

> three weeks and enjoy a space recently renovated for all our students. These issues should concern us all. (Howard Newsroom)

Here, we see feedback systems which aim for diplomatic finality rather than continuance of policy discourse, as well as preventing further mediation from invested groups through confidential resolution.

Implemented in 2019 and seeking outcomes by 2024, the *Howard Forward* initiative aims to help more students graduate on time by improving undergraduate access, retention, and on-time degree completion. The university compiles reports that summarize the following outcomes:

- Enhance Academic Excellence
- Inspire New Knowledge
- Serve the Community
- Improve Efficiency and Effectiveness
- Achieve Financial Stability

Of the eight areas considered for "enhancing academic excellence," none mention student welfare, campus infrastructure, or facilities management, but each considers adapting to enrollment increases and one aims to financially incentivize on-time graduation. In the "Serve the community" report, students are positioned not as a community that seeks collective resources, but as individuals who can take on service opportunities and immerse themselves in local community programs alongside their studies.

Howard undergraduates identify policy incongruence and a lack of response. Finally, some of the discourse surrounding the protests attempts to delegitimize student concerns and appeal to more orthodox institutional proceedings, like the president "maintaining my willingness to sit down with the student occupants of the Blackburn Center as soon as the building is vacated" to students already protesting the performative decorum of "calm down" rhetoric. In the case of Howard's fall 2021 students' protests, we observe students actively exercising their right to

publicly protest; this is the potential that democracy–not even done *right* but, perhaps, done *differently*–has. I would maintain that students successfully garnering institutional resolutions by forming just the types of interest groups aforementioned using democratic voice-as-protest (as opposed to exiting) while remaining loyal (not leaving) from a rhetorical situation, is a tangible avenue of political exigency for students–unless we view their efforts as mere imagination and squawk. These students embody policy.

In 2018, students at Howard held a similar protest which successfully materialized a "revision of the school's sexual assault policy, a review of policies allowing campus police offers to carry weapons and the creation of a food bank on campus." These are three separate but intersecting policy areas–local, yes, but this is the area I and Collins argue needs more discourse–affected extra-cyclically with regard to elections. As we can trace the 2018 chorus to that of 2021, we have an opportunity to systematize and transfer frameworks of policy implementation that not-so-radically shift the distribution of power in higher education and policy implementation. When an HBCU in Washington, D.C., whose faculty are inevitably working within and researching policy, can organize around student interests and deliver resolutions despite the policies they claim work against them, I do not see ideal democracy, I see an extant one and a flash of how it could operate more democratically.

Classic Stage Model of the Policy Process

Policies are usually developed at what we recognize as the “tops” of political systems, but their praxis occurs “close to the grass roots” (“Policy” 7). From implementation to practice, then, policies are *always* altered by contextual factors and taken up by the groups they affect and/or overlook (Hamann and Lane). Moreover, Hamann and Lane’s (2004) study concludes that policy adaptation is needed at the local level, where institutional norms can shift to include local and

internal intermediaries as agents of policy change (448-449). Because policy adaptation is not predictable and cannot always be disaggregated from synergies with other policies, however, local policy response is needed:

> In relation to federal policy, [state education agency] staff members are more "local." That is, they are more proximate to state-level policy currents as well as to the cultural norms and understandings that influence response to policy. (Hamann and Lane 450)

Locality and interiority to implementation's "grass roots" level affects how policies materialize and circulate more broadly. Because this contextual mediation of policy is inevitable, systematizing frameworks to reduce ambiguity between levels, or constructing more horizontal feedback monitoring systems, is a logical aim.

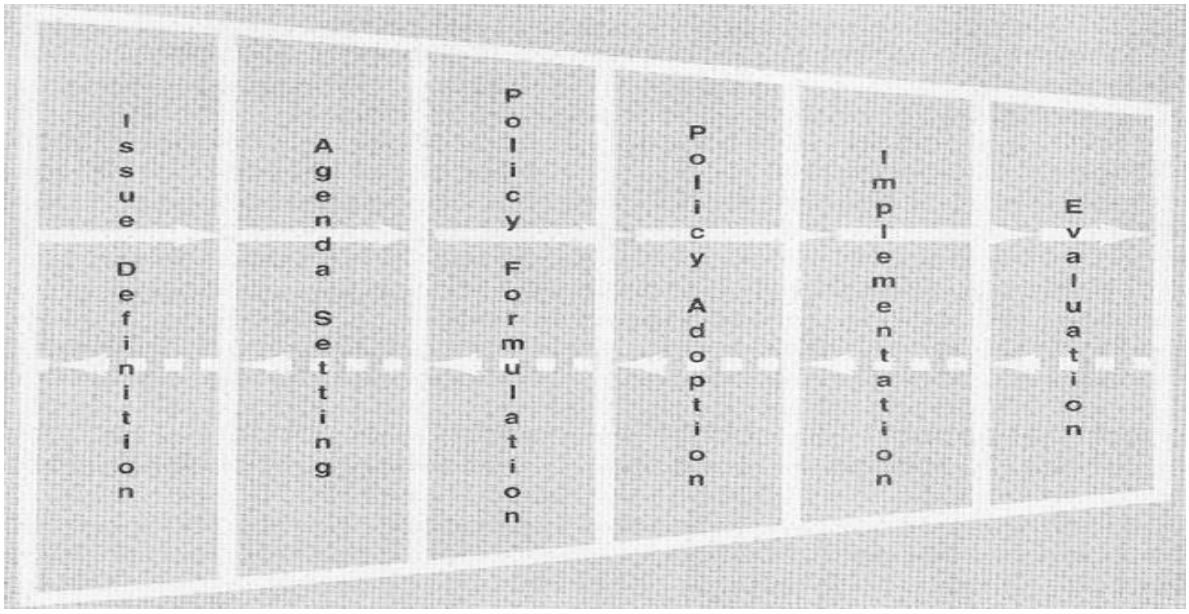

Figure 1: classic stage model of the policy process.

The classic stage model of the policy process illustrated in Fowler's ("Policy" 16; Figure 1) *Policy Studies for Education Leaders* is shaped like a funnel to show that "the process functions selectively" (15). At each stage, intermediaries focus more specifically on some policy issues and, in consequence, exclude others for now or indefinitely. The dotted arrows fluctuate both left

and right to represent the back-and-forth shifting that occurs between stages at times (e.g., following policy formulation, an issue is added to the agenda which shifts the process opposite the flow of the ideal process).

Indeed, throughout most of the twentieth century, states "let local school districts have broad latitude in the areas of curriculum and pedagogy" ("Policy" 16). In the above model, however, the "evaluation" stage does not represent this latitude. Instead, policy evaluations are outsourced or produced by the governing body that employed the policy ("Policy" 18). As such, these evaluations tend to focus on standardized factors around which agents attempt to maneuver. Such tactics include preventing evaluation, shaping evaluative criteria that guarantee outcomes, inciting conflict between clients and evaluators, and creating barriers to accessing or collecting data ("Policy Evaluation" 291-292). While the "implementation" stage includes those in districts who oversee how policy is put into practice, students and parents are positioned as clients who passively receive policy; thus, the evaluators of those policies are positioned not to evaluate needs in specific contexts or report radical findings, but to create a cohesive report that ingratiates implementers with policymakers ("Policy Evaluation" 291).

Bell and Stevenson's Policy Stages Model

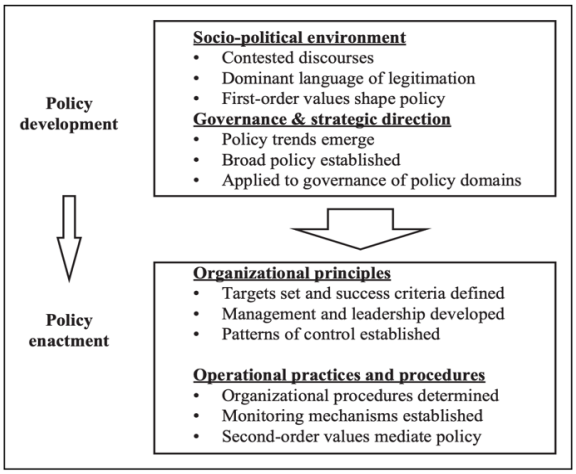

Figure 2: Bell and Stevenson's policy development and enactment stages model.

Bell and Stevenson (2015), in "Towards an analysis of the policies that shape public education: Setting the context for school leadership," address not only how teachers' and school leaders' practices are shaped by educational policy, but also by the "relationship between political ideology and the work of teachers and lecturers in schools" (149). Though beyond the scope of this paper, the researchers also suggest that this relationship can help in "developing coping and avoidance strategies in the face of tensions between educational policy and teacher professionalism" (149). Illustrated in Figure 2, Bell and Stevenson (2015) propose their own framework for policy implementation, which aims to combine the importance of central agencies that determine policy while also accounting for how policy is variably mediated and contested at various levels in hierarchical systems (148). The authors note the potential for this framework to alter typical top-down approaches to policy implementation, going as far as acknowledging the capacity for local contexts to co-opt policy for resistance against broader, dominant discourses.

Here, I would like to direct attention to the "operational practices and procedures" level of Bell and Stevenson's policy process. This stage accounts for the intersection of policy frameworks and institutional incorporation of those policies, whereby *second-order values* mediate policy as noted in the above figure. Bell and Stevenson (2015) remark that the "same socio-political environment" which helps determine the directions of policy "is shaped and re-shaped by the interpretations of policy that emerge from the formulation of strategic directions and from the processes of enactment" (149). Thus, it is feasible to enact systems that emphasize second-order values that respond to both policy outcomes and the contexts that affect how those outcomes are achieved or revised. An appropriate revision of or addition to Bell and Stevenson's framework could simply be an arrow that pushes feedback from the "bottom" of the chain back to the top, which would indicate a cyclical or reciprocal synergistic power dynamic between

clients (students and their guardians), stakeholders (students and faculty/staff) and policymaking institutions.

Diffuse Institutional Power Dynamics

To understand how evaluative feedback frameworks can increase their fidelity to democratic values, we should address the following question: *where are students positioned in policy feedback systems?* What we observe in both Figures 1 and 2 above, and what we may deduce from the relevant literature on the topic, is that students are positioned at the beginning (exigence), bottom (least power), and end (subjects of study) of the policy process. In other words, students provide the urgent need or demand for issues to be placed on policy agendas, are often the last to be considered for how they embody those policies in practice and are only granted implementation agency to the extent that they provide data to align with or reject proposed outcomes. Even a cursory look at the effects of increasing student agency in education policy evaluation leads to the need for actualizing potential agency in feedback systems.

If we take into consideration Hirschman's (1970) work on recuperative tactics like exit and voice, we might logically conclude that students and their guardians are unlikely to exit (change schools, districts, or residence) each time a policy decision or outcome is unfavorable. Therefore, utilizing voice–advocating to change practices, policy, and outputs (Hirschman 30)–is more likely for firms and their clients, which, as a net benefit, can help sustain salience around relevant issues beyond election cycles or policy implementation. Monitoring this salience and promoting agency across levels of the policy process requires a framework that allows for this function (e.g., Smith's rhetorical chorus). Before arriving there, we will examine the institutional power dynamics at play in policy feedback systems.

In a 1979 interview entitled “Truth and Power,” Michel Foucault rejects a continuist schema of human scientific and rational development, positing that the perceived hastiness of rational human progress misrepresents the relation between science and regimes of power. Rather than viewing scientific discovery as unprovoked revelations of inherent truth, Foucault recognizes what postmodernists later coin as relativist, rather than positivist, narratives of scientific discourse. Humans will always ideologize discourses, so Foucault theorizes that it is institutions and their members that naturalize which ideologies dominate, drive the reproduction of human action, and permeate dominant narratives like scientific discovery.

This inquiry into institutional reproduction gives rise to Foucault’s analysis of subjects as constituted *within* historical, institutional frameworks–what Foucault calls *genealogies*–that “account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains, of objects etc., without having to make reference to a [human] subject” (“Power/knowledge” 117). Foucault reconfigures how we might perceive power relations: power is productive, concrete, and precise in character. Although feeling and experiencing power dynamics is quite common, the inability to direct or control them is a condition that sustains their reproduction. Power relationships are modes of action that do not act directly and immediately on others: they diffusely “act upon actions.” Thus, once systems materialize actions, they integrate into a broader context of actions that distance themselves from agents of change, thus rendering agency as limited to the boundaries of institutional conditions.

Because, in power relations, actions act on other actions, it is institutions that guide conduct and put in order outcomes through accepted norms or narratives (“The Subject and Power” 789). More broadly, objectifying the population creates the exigence for empirically modifying and

establishing narratives about power by supposing what is true and not true, accepted and not accepted, and entrusting the formation of these accepted notions to disciplines and professions.

Unlike accepted notions of repressive juridical power, productive power operates diffusely in networks of various discourses at various levels of society–like the ways in which various levels of policy processes limit and mediate ongoing procedures. This system of power is predicated on and sustained by the incorporation of power into "the bodies of individuals, to their acts, attitudes, and modes of everyday behavior" ("Power/knowledge" 1980). Here, Foucault alludes to methods for school discipline, the study of which includes viewing children's bodies as scientific objects or nodes that correspond to data, rather than individuals or groups who possess agency in productive systems.

Given the disembodiment of primary policy clients (students), manifold levels of composition and implementation of policy mediated by myriad contexts, and the systematic limitation imposed by standardized feedback procedures, I propose we accept Julia Smith's rhetorical chorus framework to meaningfully revise and monitor feedback systems over time; this requires that we also consider the agency required for communities to circumvent repressive feedback systems and locally mediate policy implementation.

Rhetorical Chorus: Selecting and Deselecting Pieces of a Composition

Bombastic critiques of democracy often lead to bombastic inaction. Earlier, I introduced the 2018 and 2021 Howard student protests as a case for framing deliberative democracy and how passive, illusory, performative democracy falls short. Their actions exemplify a moment of liberatory and democratic success. How do we sustain this kind of momentum? How do we reproduce institutional conditions that measure, support, and respond to deliberative policy discourse? Moving to recover rhetoric beyond what is deemed canonical, Julia Smith (2014)

frames her use of rhetorical chorus as a method for exploring complex rhetorical situations, departing from classical Greek models:

> Like a Greek chorus, the rhetorical chorus comprises individual voices that participate in augmenting and distributing the main rhetorical message. However, unlike the classical chorus model, the rhetorical chorus does not speak in unison, so it is possible to identify individual voices and distinguish their movements at different points in the text and manuscript. (181)

Any chorus would suffer if the members who back more prominent parts were unaccounted for in a performance. Their collective hard work is foiled at the moment of performance and the show is ruined. Or is it? If the audience were looped into the fact that some performers were missing, maybe some would leave, but perhaps many would remain. Unless cancelled or postponed, the chorus can still utilize the hours of practice behind them and garner responses from the audience presently to inform later performances, which would hopefully include a full supporting chorus who, as time goes on, can consider that feedback despite not attending the performance. Likewise, policy implementation issues occur when policymakers conduct a chorus devoid of relevant inputs, but the show–political cycles, discourses, and proceedings–must go on, and will be systematically constructed to do so. If interest groups are constantly the only section of the chorus showing up, we hear a misconstrued, illusory representation of the piece. But the institution needs to keep the lights on–those are real.

In Writing and Rhetoric scholarship, the primacy of physical objects and artifacts has often limited whose ideas are recovered and how those ideas inform future discursive and historiographical work (Glenn). Certainly, it is difficult to trace ancient cultures without extant physical objects; however, we in the field must understand that western rhetorics have touted

democracy throughout a decidedly undemocratic history (Ramsey) and that many revered rhetorical figures, like Socrates, are known through secondary and tertiary accounts. Thus, we ask *for what reasons* have we primarily recovered white, male, and western works and called them canonical despite our modern understanding of the erroneous nature of this presumption? To maintain focus, I will exercise brevity: because recovery systems were not constructed to trace, recover, or formalize contributions from those understudied groups. And, therefore, those accountable for tracing the field's dominant narratives have reproduced limited practices for implementing change rather than produce new, reflexive frameworks that promote synergy between historical and contemporary developments.

One theoretical solution that holds weight in rhetorical discourse, and which I believe can be applied to education policy implementation discourse, is Julia Smith's (2014) concept of the rhetorical chorus. This concept relies on the familiar idea of collaboration, in that there is cooperation in the production of texts. Its rhetorical flexibility, though, is what gives the rhetorical chorus its aptitude: it acknowledges the reality of both the individual rhetor (principal) and the presence of other participants in production (Smith 180). Unlike the classical chorus model, Smith's rhetorical chorus does not speak in unison–or only at major choral performances–so it is possible to identify individual voices and distinguish their movements at different points in textual and manuscript production.

Smith utilizes the rhetorical chorus framework to advocate for the recovery of women's rhetorics from ancient to contemporary periods. In doing so, she reveals that women, despite being made silent in most of the canonical recovery efforts, developed rhetorical practices that "made-do" with the available means of communication and persuasion–namely letter writing, unique genre conventions (mystic writing), and the enlisting of scribes to annotate spoken word

to text (183-184). The terminology of musical texture and chorus accounts for the ways in which individual parts or voices are put together to form a whole, what we might colloquially call cooperation or synergy. Yet, even when many voices blend in a choral event, it is possible to distinguish the range of certain groups of voices (bass/soprano, lead/solo) from other members of the ensemble at different points in time and space. The use of rudimentary musical terminology allows us to analyze different voices whose traces are present in the margins of a rhetorical artifact.

The rhetorical chorus can also assist in producing more horizontal power dynamics that distribute agency across relevant contexts. As has been heretofore described, we may view policies as trans-contextual and traceable manuscripts mediated by forensic rhetoric, deliberative rhetoric, and dialectic channels. And, it follows in Smith's (2014) work:

> The manuscript functions as a dynamic space, which allows for the entrance of multiple authors and their rhetorical agendas. This mediating body of individuals, which [Smith calls] the rhetorical chorus, helps preserve the initial rhetorical message, even as they appropriate the message, infiltrate it with their own rhetorical agendas, and initiate their own rhetorical messages within the space of a rhetorical artifact. (180-181).

Smith emphasizes not just the "all hands on deck" approach of rhetorical chorus, but also the homophonic and polyphonic relationship between the contributing voices.

In the homophonic position is the lead voice–solo sections, narrators, policymakers–that mediates the prominent parts of discourse to others in supportive roles (Smith 190). The polyphonic position, on the other hand, reflects the considerable number of voices that combine to participate in producing and interpreting the artifact; members of the rhetorical chorus, then, "act as mediators of the imaginative space between the artifact and the audience" (Smith 191).

Such mediation meaningfully aligns with Bell and Stevenson's (2015) and Fowler's (2013) theories on "grass roots" feedback. The rhetorical chorus framework allows us to describe fluctuations in homophonic and polyphonic relationships between different people involved in not only the composition but also the editing and distribution of rhetorical artifacts over extended periods of time. Such allowance is exactly what I hope can be provided in policy implementation feedback systems should we consider the rhetorical chorus framework to make alterations to standardized evaluation.

Conclusion: Integrating Deliberation through Radical Synergy, Not Deconstruction

On one hand, Foucault argues that subjects can be removed from discourse if that discourse is exclusive, resulting in dominant, material institutional narratives that standardize both results and the experiences that lead to those results. On the other, Collins finds that deliberative, democratic, and localized action produces favorable outcomes even where power relations exist, which might help reduce disembodiment of "grass roots" evaluation and increase agency at what is commonly referred to as the end or bottom of feedback systems. These perspectives are ostensibly at odds. The supposition that discursive outcomes–policies–can be achieved through *either* disembodiment (focus on the policy text) *or* engaged democracy is misleading.

Together, this implementation and operationalization of policy and subsequent public response aligns with Smith's (2014) rhetorical chorus framework. Additionally, Page and Shapiro (1983) find that two-thirds of the time, changes in public opinion affect policy, indicating, too, that one-third of the time changes in public opinion do not affect policy. If variation in public policy is usually representative of variation in preferences, then it is likely that congruent changes in policy will usually follow (Page and Shapiro 189). Smith's rhetorical chorus framework can be employed here to account for variations in congruence and

representativeness in democratic systems. Additionally, this and further work may necessarily call for scholarly collaboration between rhetoricians, policymakers, community leaders, and more, especially at the local level.

Jonathan E. Collins' (2020) "Urban Representation through Deliberation: A Theory and Test of Deliberative Democracy at the Local Level" highlights how officials in large cities compose policy concerns and tasks that represent their communities. But only to the extent that "residents of large cities demand democratic ability," will local officials "approach the policy-making process with those demands in mind" (Collins 28). Moreover, Collins' work shows that deliberative democratic ability can exist in large cities with myriad fluctuations and transformations of public opinion. However, the level of community engagement is proportional to citizens' political interest and relations in the area. The interest-engagement trend is evidenced by Terry Moe's (2006) finding that union support results in higher voter turnout and favorable election outcomes for participants, *despite* class differences and living outside the districts in which voters are employed (23). Collins, in another study entitled "Do Teachers Want Democracy: Deliberative Culture and Teachers' Evaluation of Schools," finds that deliberative cultures are more likely to positively evaluate school performance and include students and teachers in decision-making at the school level.

Winstone et al. (2021) call for a repurposing of the survey and feedback framework for evaluating learning outcomes, which buttresses their primary inquiry: student input validity has been called into question because of their positioning, not because of their aptitude or lack of engagement. In fact, across analyzed survey items, Winstone et al. (2021) find "no examples of items where students were positioned as the primary agents. Furthermore, some items position 'feedback' as the primary agent, which implies that feedback itself can have effects without any

role for the student in this process" (7). Moreover, the chorus is flexible in its capacity for change along the way. Should the relevant focus of agent feedback be the motivations behind or decisions of policymakers, for example, instead of the written policy itself, the framework can adjust and allow relevant agents to monitor these adjustments as the policy process shifts back and forward. It is not my intention to recycle the notion of democracy as wholesale illusory (it is indeed lived, material), nor do I suggest a fundamental or radical deconstruction of democracy. On the contrary, I suggest we need to include better material practices within democratic environs and honoring actors in localized networks, deliberatively and democratically.

Works Cited

Anzia, S.F. (2014). A Theory of Election Timing. *Timing and Turnout: How Off-Cycle Elections Favor Organized Groups*. The University of Chicago Press. 16-36.

Bell, L., & Stevenson, H. (2015). Towards an analysis of the policies that shape public education: Setting the context for school leadership. *Management in Education, 29(4)*. Sage Journals. 146-150.

Cerna, L. (2013). The Nature of Policy Change and Implementation: A Review of Different Theoretical Approaches. *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).* 3-26. https://www.oecd.org/education/ceri/The%20Nature%20of%20Policy%20Change%20and%20Implementation.pdf

Collins, J.E. (2018). Urban representation through deliberation: A theory and test of deliberative democracy at the local level. *Journal of Urban Affairs, 40(7)*. 952-973. **https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2018.1427507**

Collins, J.E. (2020). Do Teachers Want Democracy? Deliberative Culture and Teachers' Evaluations of Schools. *Urban Affairs Review, 56(5)*. 1529-1552. **https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087419869550**

Collins, J.E. (2021). Does the Meeting Style Matter? The Effects of Exposure to Participatory and Deliberative School Board Meetings. *American Political Science Review, 115(3)*. Cambridge University Press. 790-804.

Comer, K. (2019). Roles and Relationships: Possibilities for Student Participation in Writing Program Administration. In Banaji et al. (Eds.) The Rhetoric of Participation: Interrogating Commonplaces in and Beyond the Classroom.

Deacon, R. (2002). Truth, Power and Pedagogy: Michel Foucault on the rise of the disciplines. *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 34(4).* Carfax Publishing. 435-458.

Foucault, M. 1980. *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings by Michel Foucault, 1972-77*. (C. Gordon, Ed.). Brighton, England: Harvester.

Foucault, M. (1982). The Subject and Power. *Critical Inquiry, 8(4).* The University of Chicago Press. 777-795.

Fowler, F. C. (2013). Policy: what it is and where it comes from. *Policy Studies for Educational Leaders: an Introduction* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson. 3-21.

Fowler, F. C. (2013). Policy Evaluation: Determining if the Policy Works. *Policy Studies for Educational Leaders: an Introduction* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson. 278-297.

Franklin, J. (22 October 2021). *Students at Howard University are protesting poor housing conditions on campus.* National Public Radio (NPR). https://www.npr.org/2021/10/22/1048517681/students-at-howard-university-are-protesting-poor-housing-conditions-on-campus

Franklin, J. (15 November 2021). *Howard University students reach an agreement with officials after a month of protest.* National Public Radio (NPR). https://www.npr.org/2021/11/15/1055929172/howard-university-students-end-protest-housing-agreement

Glenn, C. (1997). Mapping the Silences, or Remapping Rhetorical Territory. *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiquity Through the Renaissance*. Southern Illinois University Press. 1-17.

Greenfield, L. (2011). The “standard English” fairy tale: A rhetorical analysis of racist pedagogies and commonplace assumptions about language diversity. In L. Greenfield &

K. Rowan (Eds.), *Writing centers and the new racism: A call for sustainable dialogue and change*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.

Hamann, E.T., & Lane, B. (2004). The roles of state departments of education as policy intermediaries: Two cases. *Educational Policy, 18(3).* SAGE Journals. 426-455.

Harrington, S., Fox, S., & Hogue, T.M. (1998). Power, Partnership, and Negotiations: The Limits of Collaboration. *WPA: Writing Program Administration, vol. 21(2-3).* 52-64.

Hess, F.M. (2013). *The Missing Half of School Reform.* National Affairs. https://www.nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/the-missing-half-of-school-reform

Hirschman, A. O. (1970). *Exit, voice, and loyalty: Responses to decline in firms, organizations, and states*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hochschild, J.L., & Scovronick, N. (2003). Introduction. The American Dream and the Public Schools. 1-8. Oxford University Press.

Howard Forward. (2021). *Homepage: Howard Forward: Howard University's Strategic Plan*. https://strategicplan.howard.edu/

Howard Newsroom Staff. (2 November 2021). Campus Update: President State of the University Address. Howard University Office of University Communications. https://newsroom.howard.edu/newsroom/static/15231/campus-update-president-state-university-address

Inoue, A.B. (2014) Theorizing Failure in US Writing Assessments. *Research in the Teaching of English, 48(3).* National Council of Teachers of English. 332-352.

Johnson, R.C. (2019). Part II: The Dream Reversed. Children of the Dream. Basic Books: New York. 143-253.

Lumpkin, L. (15 November 2021). 'We won': Howard protestors reach deal with university and end month-long occupation. National Public Radio (NPR). https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2021/11/15/howard-university-protests-end-deal/

Moe, T.M. (2006). Political Control and the Power of the Agent. *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization, 22(1)*. Oxford University Press. 1-29.

Page, B.I., & Shapiro, R. Y. (1983). Effects of public opinion on policy. *American Political Science Review, 77(1).* 175-190.

Peterson et al. (2014). The Education Iron Triangle. *Teachers Versus the Public: What Americans Think About Schools and How to Fix Them*. Brookings Institution Press. 1-13.

Peterson et al. (2014). The Teacher-Public Divide. *Teachers Versus the Public: What Americans Think About Schools and How to Fix Them*. Brookings Institution Press. 15-30.

Ramsey, S.D. (2012). The Voices of Counsel: Women and Civic Rhetoric in the Middle Ages. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly, 42(5).* Taylor & Francis. 472-489.

Richardson, R., & Phillips, K. (15 November 2021). Howard University student protest ends with a confidential agreement. NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/33-day-protest-howard-university-ends-confidential-agreement-rcna5625

Smith, J.M. (2014) The Book of Margery Kempe and the Rhetorical Chorus: An Alternative Method for Recovering Women's Contributions to the History of Rhetoric. *Advances in the History of Rhetoric, 17(2)*. 179-203. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15362426.2014.933720

Truth and Power: An interview with Michel Foucault. (1979). *Critique of Anthropology, 4(13-14).* SAGE Journals. 131-137. *https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X7900401311*

Williams, Z.R. (2010). Introduction. *In Search of the Talented Tenth: Howard University Public Intellectuals and the Dilemmas of Race, 1926-1970*. University of Missouri. 1-10.

Winstone, N.E. et al. (2021). Measuring what matters: the positioning of students in feedback processes within national student satisfaction surveys. *Studies in Higher Education.* Taylor and Francis. DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2021.1916909in