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# The Practical Importance of Inherency Analysis for Public Advocates: Rhetorical Leadership in Framing a Supportive Social Climate for Education Reforms

Kathryn M. Olson

*This essay argues that teaching rhetorical leadership, particularly the skill of inherency analysis, is crucial to preparing effective citizen leaders. Using the example of education reforms for children with disabilities, it illustrates the practical value for those interested in public concerns of understanding and using analysis of the structural, attitudinal, and philosophical inherent barriers to change. The argument focuses on the implications of and refutation options to the inherent barriers to reform of viewing education as primarily an individual rather than a social good and on Americans' public apathy toward social goods. It concludes that reforms might be more readily conceived and more effectively made salient by citizen advocates who develop their inherency analysis skills and discusses the concomitant responsibilities for communication scholars.*

*Keywords: Rhetorical Leadership; Inherency; Education Reform; Public Advocacy; Applied Scholarship*

There is a remarkable woman in Canada named Anne Larcade. Ms. Larcade, mother of two, has a son with multiple disabilities. Alexandre always had academic trouble in school. Then, at age 7, with no teaching assistant to watch out for him, he was abducted from a crowded school playground, tortured, and sexually abused. The incident exacerbated his problems, and its toll included the end of Larcade's marriage,

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already strained by the demands of both parents holding professional careers while meeting the needs of a disabled child and his infant brother (Blizzard, 2005, para's 5–9; Floyd, 2005, para's 4–7). In 1999, when *Alexandré* was 9, *Larcade*, now divorced, turned to the province for help in meeting the special requirements and sky-rocketing costs of her son's care and education. Since the early 1980s, Ontario legislation had required the province to sign special-needs agreements to help support children whose needs were greater than could be met by their parents. So *Larcade* was stunned to be told in August, 2000, that the Children's Aid Society could not pay for the services *Alexandré* required unless she signed a paper "legally abandoning" him to become a ward of the state; her alternative was to let her son go without the services that would allow him to be reintegrated into the school system (Blizzard, para's 3–4, 14; Driscoll, 2005, para's 1–2, 7–8, 10–12; Floyd, para. 3; "Parents," 2005, para's 2–7).

*Larcade* learned that the special-needs-agreement law, designed to provide help while allowing parents to keep physical and legal custody of their children, was still in effect, but that Mike Harris's Conservative administration had cut off funding for such agreements in the mid-1990s; the succeeding Liberal administration followed and defended the same tack ("Canada: Government's Decision," 2005, para's 2, 4, 11, 17–19; "Parents," 2005, para's 6–12). She temporarily ceded custody to the Children's Aid Society to get her son the help he required ("Canada: Government's Decision," para. 4). Meanwhile, *Larcade* went public with her story, turning such a national media spotlight on the government that they came to an agreement that she would not have to relinquish custody of *Alexandré* or full participation in his care and education in exchange for assistance (Driscoll, 2005). In spite of her own family's reprieve, *Larcade* became a leading citizen advocate and later the lead plaintiff in a 2005 class-action lawsuit against the provincial government on behalf of hundreds of other Canadian families forced to give up custody to meet their children's special needs; as she told a reporter, "I went public, I went political and now I've gone judicial" (Driscoll, para. 4). And her plight is not unique to Ontario; parents in England also face relinquishing custody to secure the education and care that their special-needs children require (Matyas, 2005).

As this case illustrates, policy advocacy is practically unavoidable for anyone involved with special-needs children, distressed families, health care, or education. For instance, parents of children with disabilities constantly must advocate for appropriate educational programs, care options, and accommodations for their offspring—and sometimes even for continued involvement in the related decisions. Administrators must advocate for budget allocations to accomplish (particularly unfunded or underfunded) mandates affecting disabled students. Educators must advocate to legislators regarding the potential or observed implications and inequities for children with disabilities that reform legislation such as "No Child Left Behind" creates or intensifies in practice. Health and education professionals must advocate to parents or institutions regarding the best proposed treatment or accommodation options among the available alternatives.

Advocacy in these scenarios is not merely a matter of participation, but an exercise in leadership. As Smircich and Morgan (1982) argued in the *Journal of Applied*

*Behavioral Science*, successful leadership lies primarily in symbolically generating a meaningful interpretation of a shared reality that is not only sensible to the advocate but “sensible to the led” (p. 259) and that can serve as a point of reference against which a feeling of organization and coordinated action can emerge. Although some enjoy positions of formal authority, many who serve as leaders on public issues with shared stakes, such as Larcade, do not. These individuals

find themselves adopting or being obliged to take a leadership role by virtue of the part they play in the definition of the situation. They emerge as leaders because of their role in framing experience in a way that provides a viable basis for action, e.g., by mobilizing meaning, articulating and defining what has previously remained implicit or unsaid, by inventing images and meanings that provide a focus for new attention, and by consolidating, confronting, or changing prevailing wisdom (Peters, 1978; Pondy, 1976). Through these diverse means, individual actions can frame and change situations, and in so doing enact a system of shared meaning that provides a basis for organized action. (Smircich & Morgan, p. 258)

Such leadership can be made more effective with intentional attention to the resources offered by the discipline of rhetoric. Rhetoric, the ways in which symbols influence people and so create and exercise power, is key to leading or to critiquing public leadership effectively, especially in situations characterized by social inequities of position (e.g., class, gender, and race) and power (e.g., resources, status, and formal authority). And with its centuries-long history of investment in public problems and practical tools for effectively identifying and organizing shared meanings of complex situations, rhetorical training is an excellent resource for citizens who must engage in policy advocacy.

### **What Is Rhetorical Leadership, and Why Is It Important Now?**

Critical management and analysis of meaning—recognizing and seizing the rhetorical moment—are fundamental to effective leadership, argued Fairhurst and Sarr (1996, pp. 2, 10). Using symbols (e.g., speeches, visuals, letters, memos, social protest, and opinion pieces) effectively to create, interpret, and critique shared perspectives is the essence of contemporary leadership. Twenty-first century conditions require capable citizen leaders “who may or may not have positions of authority, but who inspire and motivate followers through persuasion, example, and empowerment, not through command and control” (Bryson & Crosby, 1992, p. 21). In a world where no single institution is “in charge,” where power is shared, and where responsibility and information are diffused, the challenge is to find ways to facilitate wise communal choices and coordinate joint action on shared problems (Bryson & Crosby, pp. xi, 4). What we need to recognize now is that there are “no chosen few [leaders]. Rather there are skills, abilities, and circumstances that call on all to perform the leadership function” (Morse, 1992, p. 72). Educating rhetorical leaders unites teachable theory with practice and cultivates the ability critically to assess, shape, and meet unique symbolic demands in the situations citizens face, whether as activists, parents, politicians, educators, counselors, clinicians, or administrators.

To date, little of the work published in the *Journal of Applied Communication Research (JACR)*, the field's main vehicle for showcasing the practical applicability of communication scholarship, has focused on empowering citizen leaders. Instead, the subjects and topics usually published in *JACR* feature organizations (businesses or nonprofits) as communicative actors and privilege their viewpoints and needs. Correspondingly, prevalent topics include crisis communication, public relations, and fundraising directed from an organization to a public or stakeholders and epideictic or educational campaigns directed at employees, clients, or a public (e.g., public health communication campaigns on safe sex or using trigger locks). The results are important yet, as Waymer and Heath (2007) recently argued, they exhibit a "managerial bias" in applied communication research that overlooks the voices of the "forgotten" publics with stakes. Even *JACR* essays that consider the needs of disadvantaged publics usually address how established or organizationally legitimated professional advocates might proceed or gain access *on behalf of* the disadvantaged (e.g., Senators Landrieu and Obama on behalf of Katrina victims in Waymer & Heath; charitable and nonprofit organizations' "civic speech" in Cox & McCloskey, 1996; defense lawyers representing social justice advocates in Olson & Olson, 1994), rather than providing applications that empower those citizens themselves.

An important *JACR* exception that attended directly and primarily to the actual voices of a marginalized group—collaborative artists with disabilities who held in common the outcome that they had "not mastered a primary marker of intelligence, creativity, and citizenship in our culture: the spoken word" (Harter, Scott, Novak, Leeman, & Morris, 2006, p. 13)—dealt with artistic expression or "performing the personal in public arenas" rather than "public advocacy" challenging policies that resist their inclusion and integration. Art no doubt establishes identities, conveys political messages, and performs important functions in challenging the segregating, subordinating social milieu that the disabled currently experience. However, according to that article's own characterization, it is different from the necessary and no less important twin task of effectively advocating for policies that more widely facilitate systemic social transformations toward greater inclusion and participation of the disabled (Harter et al., p. 4). The present essay advocates using our applied knowledge to empower ordinary citizens or "emergent agents" (Waymer & Heath, 2007), not just beneficent organizations or professional spokespersons, for effective public advocacy on social policy. To do so requires rising to and exceeding the challenge that Cox and McCloskey (1996) issued for an applied communication research agenda that highlights and addresses "obstacles to rhetorical competency and public accessibility"—and not only for "those institutions of civil society representing less powerful voices and concerns" (p. 287), but also for citizens themselves. Marshalling and applying our field's trove of argumentation insights to inform citizens' own public participation fosters their rhetorical competence in understanding critically and participating effectively in policy advocacy.

As an argument scholar, I long have been convinced of the practicality of a rhetorical education in any era. Current conditions (e.g., information access, fluid organizations) create various opportunities not only for civic and social *participation*

but also for citizen *leadership*. Many assumptions that ground existing leadership preparation programs—control over scarce information, enduring formal organizational hierarchies with established lines of authority, long-term relationships within a business, civic, neighborhood, or religious community—rarely apply anymore. Instead, people find themselves called upon to play often-temporary leadership roles in numerous areas of their lives without the aid of a formal position, established reputation, control of the relevant information, a permanent or professional team, or much organizational support. In such situations one's ability to engage in effective symbol use to test assumptions and evaluate information, build credibility and community, frame a shared and actionable interpretation of a common problem, and adapt quickly to changing conditions requires rhetorical skills based in sound theory and practice. A rhetorical leadership education levels the playing field by helping those who enjoy fewer social privileges build the critically reflexive perspectives, skills, and sensibilities to take advantage of opportunities to lead for the common good (Olson, 2006).

### The Stock Issue of Inherency and Its Practicality for Rhetorical Leaders

Given limited space, let me illustrate this claim by showing the practical value to citizen advocates of understanding the traditional rhetorical concept of "inherency." Inherency is one of the five "stock" issues that an advocate is responsible for proving to justify policy change. These same stock issues also provide the basis for arguing effectively against a proposed change. The stock issues of jurisdiction, significance or ill, inherency or blame, solvency or cure, and advantages/disadvantages or costs constitute the "affirmative" or advocate for change's burden of proof, *not* because some rhetorical scholar declared it so but because they encapsulate what real policy-makers expect real advocates to demonstrate before they give assent.<sup>1</sup> Even untrained or novice advocates for change usually recognize that they must appeal to a proper body with the authority to enact the proposed change (i.e., jurisdiction), that they must demonstrate the existence of a substantial immediate or imminent problem within the present system (i.e., significance or ill), that they must propose a solution that is practical and solves much of the demonstrated ill (i.e., solvency or cure), and that they must be prepared to show that, on balance, the total benefits (some unrelated to the demonstrated ills) of this particular solution are greater than any disadvantages that it will generate or exacerbate (i.e., on-balance costs).<sup>2</sup> Obviously, perhaps, citizen leadership is socially constructed interactively through the willing constructions and actions of both "leaders" and "led" (Smircich & Morgan, 1982, pp. 258–259). The indispensable key to success is not a position of authority but that the potential citizen leader's symbol uses "frame and shape the context of action in such a way that the *members of that context* are able to use the meaning thus created *as a point of reference for their own action and understanding of the situation*" (Smircich & Morgan, p. 260, emphasis added). Because of their common-sense basis and comprehensive approach, the stock issues offer a readily available, easily teachable pattern to help organize a shared interpretation of a complex situation with shared

stakes that meets the criteria of being “sensible to the led” and able to serve “as a basis for action” by those other than the citizen who articulates them (Smircich & Morgan, pp. 259, 262).

To illustrate, in Larcade’s case the significant ills were the anguish and stigma of hundreds of parents forced to relinquish custody of their special-needs children in exchange for services, the suffering of special-needs children and their families when the parents refused to cede custody and their children were denied adequate services or the families foundering financially and emotionally to meet those needs on their own, and the negative effect on public trust of the hypocrisy of a government commitment not legally changed but no longer fulfilled. The inherency or blame lay in two successive provincial administrations’ attitudes toward special-needs agreements and their value priority of cost-cutting over meeting the needs of and legislative promises to the province’s most vulnerable citizens. The solution or cure that Larcade sought was to reinstate funding for the special-needs agreements that served children without requiring their parents to make them wards of the state. Since this policy had been in effect prior to the Harris administration with no significant disadvantages (e.g., budget-breaking expenses) or extra advantages and since any parent of a disabled child, under the Harris terms, already could force the government to cover *all* rather than only part of the costs of a disabled child’s care and education by ceding parental rights, the stock issue of cost was largely a stalemate or tipped slightly in favor of Larcade’s position.<sup>3</sup> Jurisdiction moved from the provincial executives and policy-makers to the courts over time.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Reasons for Public Advocates to Analyze Barriers to Policy Change*

The one stock issue that is not as intuitive as the others, and often gets less attention, but that is at least as important to effective advocacy as the other four, is inherency or blame. The issue here is not who can be blamed for or who initiated the problem. It is far more analytically crucial than that. The issues are: Why can’t the present system fix itself, unless the proposed policy change is enacted? How is the present system responsible for the perpetuation of the problem, *by its very nature*? Why is the currently flawed position tolerated, or why have attempted solutions failed?<sup>5</sup> After all, most shared problems that warrant advocacy are neither invisible nor brand new; a plethora of quantitative and qualitative ill evidence is usually available. Sometimes an array of potential solutions has been offered or even enacted, yet the significant ill(s) persists. And rarely do those in power flatly claim that a well-documented problem is unimportant or that they are not interested in solving it. So what is the heart of this issue, and where can an advocate—either for or against a proposed policy change—turn? The answer is to an analysis of inherency:

Inherency focuses the debate on the distinctions between an *existing* system and a *proposed* one. Central to the issue is the question of whether or not a new system is *required* in order to solve a problem we may be experiencing. (Morello, 1984, p. 237)

Identifying and analyzing the inherent barrier or barriers to productive change in the present system serve policy advocates in at least two ways. First, it establishes some reasonable chain of causality showing how the present system perpetuates, intentionally or unintentionally, a significant problem. Inherency, wrote Morello (1982), is “a causal argument indicating that the present system is at fault for any existing problems” (p. 121). Inherency analysis systematically seeks

a causal relationship between the absence of the resolution [i.e., the proposed policy change] and the continuation of the problem cited. It asks why the problem will continue as long as we fail to affirm the resolution or—to state the same thing in other words—why affirming the resolution is a necessary condition for the solution of the problem. (Patterson & Zarefsky, 1983, pp. 130–131)

Why will the documented problem, now that we are well aware of it and its negative effects, persist as long as we fail to ratify the proposed reform?<sup>6</sup> Such analysis is crucial since often the existing system does have policies or institutions explicitly *designated* to work on the problems identified (e.g., Equal Employment Opportunity, No Child Left Behind, Department of Homeland Security) but that have achieved insufficient success for reasons that must be identified (see Goodnight, Balthrop, & Parson, 1974, p. 231; Morello, 1982, p. 116). Inherency analysis pushes one to look beyond the symptoms of a problem to the causes so that relatively more effective solutions can emerge.

Second, inherency is valuable to the policy advocate because it establishes an implicit and efficient standard by which proposed solutions can be evaluated. Identifying the obstacle(s) to productive reform within the present system establishes a standard by which any new proposal’s enforcement methods and relative likelihood of success must be judged (Cox, 1975, p. 165). A policy proposal that fails to overcome, avoid, or somehow build on the aspects of the present system that functionally facilitate an existing problem’s continuation is not a reasonable gamble for decision-makers seeking improvement. Inherency, then, “is a substantive issue which concerns whether the adoption of the procedures included in the proposition [for change] are required in order to achieve the goals outlined” (Morello, 1982, p. 121). A theoretically good reform that cannot be shown to avoid or reverse the *witting or unwitting* tendencies of the present system that enable the problem’s continuation *by their very nature* should be rejected by prudent policy-makers. Clearly, inherency is more than a theoretical definition or academic concept; it is a useful system for inventing arguments, whether one is defending or refuting a proposed policy change (Cherwitz & Hikins, 1977, p. 89).

### *Three Types of Inherency*

Generally speaking, argumentation scholars acknowledge three types of inherency as hunting grounds for important barriers to change (beyond the inertia of presumption, that is): structures, attitudes, and philosophies. Structural inherency denotes the idea that the system cannot change itself because of its structure.<sup>7</sup> Agencies, institutions, laws, mores, and traditions are all structures that potentially limit a

system's ability to change policy course (see Cherwitz & Hikins, 1977, p. 85; Ziegelmüller & Kay, 1997, pp. 174–176). In the case of achieving equal rights for African-Americans, for instance, local Jim Crow laws, voting restrictions, poll taxes, gerrymandering, and enduring local traditions of segregation structurally barred the realization of equality, even after that value was affirmed in the Constitution and by the federal government.

In Larcade's case, there was no formal structural barrier to addressing the ills in a workable fashion, and in fact there was a structural requirement and process in place for the provincial government to assist families in need. Yet the Harris administration intentionally blocked expenditures for the province's safety-net system for disabled children and so perpetuated the identified ills in the existing system (e.g., the decreased involvement in and control over their children's care and education for parents who complied, such families' social stigmatization for "abandoning" their children, the deprivation of education and care suffered by disabled students whose parents refused to give up custody but did not have adequate personal resources to provide appropriately, and damage to public trust). Ontario's subsequent Liberal administration likewise refused to reinstate funding for the special-needs agreements and attempted to defend that position legally ("Canada: Government's Decision," 2005). More potentially helpful to a citizen leader facing such a situation is an understanding of attitudinal and philosophical inherency.

Attitudinal inherency, a concept that only has been in scholarly use since about 1970 (Ling & Seltzer, 1971, p. 278), "admits that the present system has the capability to solve the ills, but claims that the system will not do so because of a deeply rooted attitude" that is not easily subject to change (e.g., self-interest, the profit motive, or racial bias; Ziegelmüller & Kay, 1997, p. 174). Attitudinal barriers may explain why certain conditions and ills persist, in spite of formal attempts to address them (see Cherwitz & Hikins, 1977, pp. 85–86; Ziegelmüller & Kay, pp. 174–176). Sometimes there are "vested interests" that account for the fact that, in spite of structural possibilities for improvement, the identified ills continue in practice, and an advocate for policy change must consider such interests as formidable barriers when proposing a solution (see Kruger, 1965, p. 110). For instance, in the case of African-Americans' struggle for equal rights, the racist attitudes of Southern state and local officials proved so strong that the federal government, in response to provocative strategic choices by the civil rights movement (e.g., staging protests to integrate interstate bus terminals and other federally controlled venues), had to circumvent these officials in order to pass and enforce legislation that yielded greater racial equality (see Ling & Seltzer, p. 281).

In Larcade's case, the report of Ontario ombudsman André Marin (2005), who investigated the province's behavior, characterized the government's attitude toward funding the existing, unchallenged law as being as if special-needs agreements were "some kind of dirty *ad hoc* agreement for giving squeaky wheels the grease" (p. 38). As attorney for the class action suit Doug Elliot declared:

We say that if the Ontario government, the Harris government at the time, wanted to cancel this program, they had to go back to the legislature to do it, and they did not. I think, really, the previous Harris government went through the back door. They didn't want to face Parliament and say, "We're taking this away from disabled children, we're not going to look after disabled children anymore." So instead they simply went behind closed doors and said, "We just won't do it anymore. We will pretend the law isn't there." ("Canada: Parents," 2005)

Larcade's campaign revealed the two administrations' attitude and publicly shamed it, characterizing it as out of alignment with both the province's existing structural requirements and the attitudes and value priorities of the voters who elected these chief executives. As the "Practical Applications" section will show, Larcade's efforts could have been streamlined and sharpened with a clearer prior appreciation of inherency analysis.

Finally, philosophical inherency indicates that the present system should not adopt the proposed policy reform if it is to be true to its more important values or priorities (see Ling & Seltzer, 1971, p. 278; Ziegelmüller & Kay, 1997, pp. 175–176). The foundation of philosophical inherency, I believe, lies in policy-makers' need to prioritize and implement, in practice and with limited resources, multiple values that are all widely accepted. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) observed:

Value hierarchies are, no doubt, more important to the structure of an argument than the actual values. Most values are indeed shared by a great number of audiences, and a particular audience is characterized less by which values it accepts than by the way it grades them. . . . A hierarchy which should not be disregarded is established by the intensity with which one value is adhered to as compared to another. (p. 81)

For instance, an assumption that "excellence" and "equal access" necessarily trade off has led to prioritizing one value over the other in education policy and to sacrificing the lower priority when resources are scarce (see Halperin & Clark, 1990, pp. 34–35).<sup>8</sup> When generally accepted values are brought into conflict by the way a situation is framed, one must decide which value trumps the other, even if ideally we would like to serve both, or else work to offer a different framing that uses or avoids the conflict.

Goodnight et al. (1974) offered a good example of philosophical inherency, even if that is not what they called it at the time (and although presidential and law enforcement conduct since the 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center show a reordering of these priorities in deference to a reactive vision of "national security"):

Individual structures established by law are given certain priorities which either explicitly or implicitly raise their status above others within a given field established by the topic area. For example, the presumption that each man is innocent until proven guilty is placed above the laws of social order even though at times one may conflict with the other. The laws which guarantee the pursuit of personal happiness are subordinate to laws of the common defense in times of crisis. The laws guaranteeing security of the nation may be placed above the laws of free speech. . . . The debater who approaches an issue from this perspective most profitably seeks out those priorities which are in conflict because of "inappropriate" placement

within the hierarchy. . . . In each instance, the placement of one priority—or value—above another creates a harm which cannot be solved within the current hierarchy of priorities. The debater argues not so much that the structure should be eliminated—as would a revolutionary—but rather that the ranking of priorities must be altered so that solution of a significant problem takes precedence over mere adherence to existing order. (pp. 236–237)

When considering philosophical inherency in the 1950's–1970's struggle for civil rights, the priority of domestic peace and focus on political and military conflicts abroad (e.g., the Cold War, including specific events such as President Kennedy's impending meeting with Khrushchev, and the Vietnam War) were offered to justify why concerted efforts to realize equal rights for African-Americans should wait or at least be on the country's back burner. Citizen advocates needed to apprehend and publicly contest as inappropriate and alterable these priorities. In Larcade's case, the Conservative Harris and the subsequent Liberal administration's preference for the value of cost-cutting over the values of parental rights, assuring care and education for special-needs children, or adherence to existing legislation (values not challenged outright, only implicitly and relatively prioritized as lower) constituted philosophical inherency.

Perhaps needless to say, any case for policy change may face multiple inherent barriers of different types or may turn on only one. In any case, the wise advocate for change crafts a demonstration of the significant ill(s) and selects and defends the proposed solution according to a thorough inherency analysis. Inherency analysis is just as useful to a proponent of the existing system as to a proponent of a competing policy change. Even when there is admittedly a glaring imperfection in the present system and advocates propose alternatives, these policy options can be refuted on the grounds that they are misguided and do not address the inherent barriers that actually perpetuate the present system's acquiescence to the problem. This would be a solution that does not address or circumvent the forces that make tolerance of even an evident ill the prevailing practice and does not promise a sufficient level of solvency to risk a major policy change. The proposed course of action is rendered as neither "sensible" nor as deserving of joint action on its behalf. As Kruger (1965) explained:

For if this cause [again, for why the ills are allowed to persist, not necessarily their origin] is not identified with the existing policy, the negative [i.e., opponents of the particular proposed policy change] will soon enough point out that there is then no need to eliminate this policy, and, furthermore, that the proposed policy will not solve the problem. (p. 112)

To vanquish a proposed policy change, then, an opponent need not dismiss a documented problem (a significance or ill attack) or show that the solution is flawed internally (a solvency or cure attack), but might generate a meaningful interpretation of the shared reality that persuasively identifies the proponent's missing or mistaken analysis of what blocks productive change in the present system and what is required to elude in practice the often inconspicuous or multilayered obstacles (an inherency or blame attack). Thus, the present system's presumption and the need to establish

from the outset its inherent barriers to change are not a formality but a practical requirement for effective advocacy on any side of a policy dispute.

### **Demonstrating Inherency Analysis' Usefulness for Public Advocates: Attitudinal and Philosophical Barriers to Education Reform**

Since structural barriers are easiest to identify and are specific to the particular policy proposed, the remainder of this essay demonstrates the value of inherency analysis by identifying contemporary attitudinal or philosophical barriers that merit consideration by advocates for all sorts of social reforms, but particularly education reforms. Variations and combinations of these deeply-held attitudes or value prioritizations underpin resistance to policy changes in pursuit of a goal widely acknowledged as laudable: an excellent education for all students. Uniting them is the currently prevailing view that education should be treated *primarily* as an individual, not a social, good. Holly G. McIntush, a research specialist for the Texas House of Representatives' Office of Bill Analysis, traced this view's rise to the 1983 release of *A Nation at Risk* by the National Commission on Excellence in Education.

McIntush (2000) argued that this presidential task-force report, a report that was requested originally to prove that U.S. schools were sound and to lay the groundwork for eliminating the newly-established Department of Education (DOE), set the agenda for U.S. education policy and discourse from the Reagan years to the present (pp. 419–421, 432–439).<sup>9</sup> Her contention is that uncritical acceptance of *A Nation at Risk*, particularly in light of the legitimacy and aura of prestige and objectivity that the authoring presidential commission lent it, publicly “shifted the focus of education discourse from education as a means of social and political equalization to education as a means to economic prosperity” (p. 421). While this was not a new theme—prior to Ronald Reagan, U.S. presidents including Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson had argued that the “use” of education was to foster economic and technological development and a competitive edge in international rivalry—it is a very different, much more instrumental view than Franklin Delano Roosevelt's or Lyndon B. Johnson's intermediate contention that education is a civil right and an end in itself (Keppel, 1990, pp. 7–9).

The report frames education reform as an urgent problem couched, from its opening paragraph, in *economic* terms, both in values (e.g., individualism, competition, “marketable” skills, and prosperity) and solutions (McIntush, 2000, pp. 426–429).

*A Nation at Risk's* most influential legacy was that it shifted focus from how education could be used to achieve equality to how education functions as a means of economic competition. This shift can be seen throughout the document. The focus on the free market and the war metaphors carry with them an emphasis on competition. Free market ideology teaches us that competition is a good thing—it inspires us to try our best and push ourselves to the limit. This is more than a semantic shift: there is a trade-off between equality and competition. The commission's competition-related findings and proposed solutions, particularly

the focus on standardized achievement tests, the support of ability grouping and tracking, and the subsequent consideration of school choice initiatives, have very serious implications for education equality today. (McIntush, p. 435)

*A Nation at Risk* precipitated a significant value reprioritization of the major goal of U.S. education since the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision: universal access to quality education (McIntush, 2000, p. 437). That decision championed education's importance in equipping people to perform basic public citizenship and explicitly affirmed a good education as the very foundation of good citizenship. *Brown* not only distinguished access to a quality education as an essential means to prepare all citizens to participate in the body politic and the economic community, but also characterized the state's failure to provide equal education as "a devastating form of discrimination and a violation of students' civil rights" (McIntush, p. 435). In the wake of *A Nation at Risk* though, the "interests of society are subservient to and contingent upon the interests, effort, and success of the individual" (McIntush, p. 429). Education is redefined as an individual good, and so the primary responsibility falls on *individual students and schools* to "keep up," as No Child Left Behind makes manifest (see Olson, submitted). This view suggests that those who do not "keep up" will suffer economically and be effectively disenfranchised and that, while regrettable, such individual consequences are justifiable or at least not the responsibility of the federal government to remediate (McIntush, pp. 425, 428–429, 430). Obviously, entrenchment of this attitude and value hierarchy makes it easier to decline to provide (particularly costly) services and accommodations for students who have difficulty "keeping up" on their own, such as students with disabilities.

Over time, the *de facto* compromise legitimating an activist welfare state with its implications for supporting public schools, which emerged after World War II and held until the mid-1970s, has been effectively subordinated through a symbolic reframing and reprioritization of values (Apple, 2004, pp. 158–159). Purpel and Shapiro (1995) elaborated:

"Standards," "excellence," and "rigor" became the rallying cry for those Americans who, embattled on the economic front and alarmed by a shutting down of the ready prospects of upward mobility for their children, chose a strategy that would increase the differentiating and hierarchical effects of schooling. The strategy gave support to methods of instruction, forms of evaluation, and curricula, [sic] that intensified the competitive aspects of education and that reasserted the culturally advantaged position of children from the middle class and of their peers from white and native working-class backgrounds. Among these groups "excellence" becomes an extension of a competitive and individualistic discourse of survival in the context of an economy whose manufacturing industry is in rapid decline and skilled work much harder to find. (p. 54)

Public admission of social responsibility to provide for and integrate society's neediest students into education or consideration of education as a civil right, priorities during the presidencies of Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson (Keppel, 1990, pp. 8–9; see also pp. 11–12), no longer have presumption. Parallel inherency analyses of the

perceived dichotomy between and prioritization of social and individual good can inform citizen advocates on issues of welfare reform, social security, and healthcare insurance.

Three corollaries make this a barrier to which reform advocates must pay careful attention. First, it sets up education as a matter of consumption rather than social obligation. While the negative implications of the “student as consumer” metaphor at the university level have been explored (e.g., McMillan & Cheney, 1996), the consequences of employing this metaphor at the elementary and secondary levels are both worse and unaddressed. The metaphor obscures the responsibility of and benefit to society of providing an adequate education for all its children and ignores the compulsory nature of elementary and secondary schooling. As Robert Bellah and his *Habits of the Heart* colleagues Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1985/1986) found, America may have a strong latent affinity for “community,” but its discourse displays a dominant tendency toward “individualism.” Any wise citizen leader must take this bias into account, either by challenging relative value prioritization overtly or by showing how the policy being defended actually serves the dominant individualistic strain (even if that is not the policy’s main purpose) or by tapping the vein of community interest to make a special case for why the latent community value should take priority in the case at hand (i.e., why an exception is warranted).

Second, this predisposition reinforces not only an individualistic take on education but also contributes to the disturbing trend of equating citizenship with consumption. Michael W. Apple (2004), the John Bascom Professor of Curriculum and Instruction and Educational Policy Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, noted that democracy has been reduced to consumption and citizenship to possessive individualism, with the result that our “very sense of public responsibility is withering in ways that will lead to even further social inequalities” (pp. 152, 150). McIntush’s history of the changes in the framing of debates over education reform during the last 25 years indicated how Americans came to equate fulfilling their democratic obligations with proper consumption choices rather than engaging in more traditional types of participation that are indispensable to democracy. Similarly, communication scholar Greg Dickinson (2005) recently traced the 125-year trend in Europe and the United States of consumer culture becoming a crucial way for individuals to enact public citizenship (pp. 273–274). With his case study of responses to the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center, Dickinson demonstrated how thorough-going the perceived equation of consumption and democracy is. Extending his reasoning suggests how individual consumption choices (both amount and choices such as buying a “Support Our Troops” car magnet or patronizing a store that donates a small percentage of each purchase to Hurricane Katrina aid) get equated rhetorically with democratic participation and encourage a sense that no further citizen involvement is required.

Together these two moves narrow citizens’ sense of responsibility to just themselves and their own families, making education reform that does not directly affect their personal consumption of education of little interest and encouraging resistance to reforms that might require higher taxes—which would reduce the amount of money

that they have available for individual discretionary purchases as their fulfillment of civic responsibilities. To illustrate, Apple (2004) noted that the virulence of the home schooling movement mirrors

the growth of privatized consciousness in other areas of society. It is an extension of the “suburbanization” of everyday life that is so evident all around us. In essence, it is the equivalent of gated communities and of the privatization of neighborhoods, recreation, parks, and so many other things. It provides a “security zone” both physically and ideologically. . . . This “cocooning” is not just about seeking an escape from the problems of the “city” (a metaphor for danger and heterogeneity). It is a rejection of the *idea* of the city . . . [with its] [c]ultural and intellectual diversity, complexity, ambiguity, uncertainty, and proximity to “the Other” . . . (p. 155)

If the impulse to isolate oneself personally from exposure to difference or value challenge is so strong, the aversion to using tax money to support or expand the opportunity for others to do so is likely to be even stronger.

Third, education reform on behalf of any group with special needs is impeded further by the interaction of these first two attitudes with another: an expected public posture of political apathy. In her extensive participant-observer study of U.S. volunteers, activists, and recreational groups, sociologist Nina Eliasoph (1998) documented an interesting contradiction in the ways people talk to each other about the political world and their place in it: their public and private performances were exactly the reverse of what one would expect. Citizens’ public or “front-stage” conversations about issues of shared concern were less wide-ranging and couched in more self-interested and biased terms than were their intimate or “back-stage” conversations on those matters. In other words, the norms in public were to define very narrowly which political issues impacted one’s life, dismiss other shared problems as “not close to home” or “too big for me to do anything about,” and blatantly frame one’s political positions on the tiny remainder as a matter of personal experience and selfish, not social, interest. One on one, Eliasoph repeatedly found her subjects more well-informed, discerning, and public-spirited than they seemed in public settings. Yet they acted as if it was socially acceptable to posture in public as politically apathetic or selfish. On the rare occasions when they advocated in public, these Americans defaulted to personal experience and self-interested explanations for their involvement. If they spoke up at all, apparently they considered it relatively more decorous to rely primarily or exclusively on evidence from personal, subjective experience and to claim a direct, often explicitly selfish, personal stake to warrant a “legitimate” right to speak.

Consistent with Eliasoph’s argument, it would be acceptable for Larcade to advocate for reform in Ontario’s practices because her family was affected directly and personally. However, given what Eliasoph found, it would be difficult for others without such personal stakes and experience to be acceptable as public advocates of disabled children’s education, even if they privately believed it was a matter of shared, public concern and had reliable (but not personal) evidence of the negative social effects of existing practices. This combination creates an enormous burden for the

minority who most obviously endures the brunt of an ill—to serve also as reform’s primary citizen advocates, on top of coping with the effects of that ill on their own lives. Further, this expectation that Americans in public will express a shared concern based on “selfish” motivations and will rely on personal experience and individual cases as the evidence for their arguments makes it that much easier for a “rational” institution to dismiss such challenges as subjective or exceptional and to retrench its position in a claim to consider “objectively” the “public good” of “all citizens.” The intertwined complexity of this set of inherent barriers to education reform deserves serious consideration by any advocate planning a policy case.

### Practical Applications

#### *Immediate Advocacy Options Suggested by This Inherency Analysis*

Two admittedly incompatible advocacy routes are worth the consideration of readers persuaded by the above education reform inherency analysis. One is to promote a proposed education reform on the basis of its ability to serve as a means to fulfill the prevailing value hierarchy. In other words, explicitly articulate the value of the proposed reform to a wider circle of “selfish” and “close to home” interests—the interests of individuals beyond those directly affected (i.e., students with disabilities and their families). This approach uses the inherent barrier as a springboard for justifying policy change. It avoids or even employs what have been inherent obstacles to change by framing the reform as a move that somehow significantly serves the well-being of education “consumers” beyond those whose interests motivated the proposed change (e.g., disabled students).<sup>10</sup> It is the less difficult and less extreme, though perhaps more philosophically objectionable, approach because it uses rather than resists entrenched “individualistic” attitudes and value priorities to leverage prosocial policy change.

An alternative way to stake one’s proposed policy change by using rather than attempting to rearrange the prevailing value hierarchy is to reframe the proposed reforms as realizing other already highly-placed values—values other than those with which the situation is currently aligned, such as patriotism (see Lakoff, 2004). Treating federal education policy as a means to other shared, valued ends (e.g., successfully fighting a war, national security, or breaking down racial barriers) rather than as a good in itself is standard practice in U.S. history. Persuasively framing a move’s consistency with and currency in terms of another already highly-ranked value has proven sufficient in the past to warrant opponents’ agreement, even without substantial proof that the change actually helps achieve the goal in practice (see Halperin & Clark, 1990, pp. 19–20). In both these moderate approaches, the advocate inventively capitalizes on existing attitudes and philosophical priorities (the inherent barriers) in a new way to make them stepping stones to fostering change.

A second, opposing argumentative tack is to try to overcome barriers with a direct frontal assault on the attitudes and value priorities that intentionally or unintentionally succor the existing ills, and then advocate for specific, superior

alternatives. Minimally, the advocate can expose and publicly object to the existing, often implicit attitudes and value hierarchies that fund the present system and its discourse on education (e.g., individualism over community). One then can take further steps to oppose those barriers as undesirable or inappropriate to the situation or argue actively for a better alternative prioritization. This was Anne Larcade's approach, although she did not conceive of it as such at the time.

The applied practicality of learning rhetorical leadership generally and inherency analysis in particular is suggested by two emails that I received from Larcade herself. Although we had been unable to connect for an interview, I sent Ms. Larcade a copy of this essay's analysis. Her initial response was that the approach was "relevant and most insightful from a global perspective" that put "an academic framework to the very issues we have been advocating for" (A. Larcade, personal communication, March 6, 2006). Some months later she emailed again:

I have re-read your paper once again and provided it to counsel, the Ontario ombudsmen and the Ontario Child Advocate . . . before marching into the high appeal court Sept. 12 & 13. I am inspired by the paper and it will help me in my advocacy, for understanding language and presentation of arguments is the key to change. You nail the issues better than any journalist or solicitor has. (A. Larcade, personal communication, August 24, 2006)

Frontal assault on prevailing attitudes or value prioritizations is by far the more difficult argumentative approach, but also the one that, if successful, has greater potential to ground more radical and extensive reforms.

This tack is not as impossible as it may seem at first glance, because inventional resources are available. In addition to Bellah et al.'s (1985/1986) evidence that a latent yet accessible community sense persists among Americans, Frances Keppel (1990), former U.S. Commissioner of Education under Kennedy and Johnson, observed four themes in presidential discourse on education. Significantly, Keppel made the point that these four presidential themes "don't rise, fall and disappear. They rise, fall and sometimes come back again" (p. 10). Thus all four themes, plus Americans' latent communitarianism, are resources available to advocates, and they coexist, shifting order with the times and effective public advocacy. Presidents Washington through Jefferson were concerned about education as nation-building, or "the type of education that would prepare a generation capable of building their nation" (Keppel, p. 6). From the end of the Civil War through the time of Theodore Roosevelt, presidents were most interested in education as a way to absorb and homogenize immigrants and new citizens, including freed slaves (Keppel, p. 7). Theodore Roosevelt also launched a third theme, echoed by such Presidents as Wilson, Kennedy, and Reagan, touting the usefulness of education in economic development and international rivalry (Keppel, pp. 7–8). Fourth, Franklin Roosevelt, Kennedy, and Lyndon Johnson, at least sometimes, spoke of education as a right and a good in itself (Keppel, pp. 8–9). So, the reformer who wants to prioritize a different theme from the prevailing one(s) to advance policy changes need not start from scratch but can reactivate one of the latent themes, setting the reform in a longer historical context and shifting some presumption to that alternative.

*Long-term Practical Implications*

Specific suggestions for how an advocate might apply inherency analysis to his or her advocacy challenges appear in the above subsection, but four additional points deserve mention. First, understanding inherency analysis is practical for citizen advocates who need to provide a sensible shared interpretation that can serve as an action reference point for others regarding policy change or maintenance because it is *versatile*. Regardless of subject matter, analysis should be directed to underlying points of resistance that must be addressed or circumvented by advocates of policy change or that can be used as anchors for advocates seeking to reinforce the present system. Its versatility makes an understanding of inherency, as part of a thorough stock issues analysis, a portable rhetorical skill or paradigm to size up situation after new situation and readily provide a sensible, comprehensive interpretation that helps others make shared meaning and coordinate action with respect to a common challenge.

Second, for real-world advocates mastering inherency analysis is *efficient*. Many proposed solutions that sound good simply will not work in practice because they do not avoid or overcome the structural, attitudinal, or philosophical barriers that perpetuate the recognized ills. A desire to change things, even when backed by resources, is not sufficient. Unless the proposed solution takes into account the inherent barriers that resist change (often for reasons unrelated to a lack of desire to solve the recognized ills), it is unlikely to succeed. Thorough inherency analysis gives citizen advocates a tool to distinguish, prior to implementation, which proposals probably will get around or capitalize on the barriers and alleviate the identified ills, as well as a criterion by which to measure the relative viability of various policy options. It cuts to the chase, avoiding the need for trial and error or wasting resources on fixes that one can predict are unlikely to have the desired positive outcomes.

Third, sound inherency analysis is *flexible* enough to suggest a range of viable solutions to the same ill. Sophisticated inherency analysis not only allows an advocate to rule out various solutions, but also engenders a variety of relevant proposals, from modest reforms to radical actions. One of my favorite examples of inherency analysis revealing an easy fix to a major problem comes from an oratory that I coached many years ago. The problem was excessive, untreated wastewater dumped into U.S. lakes, rivers, and oceans. Upon investigation of the barriers to change, it became clear that a major driver of the problem was the profit motive; the regulation structure and adequate technology were in place and nobody publicly favored dumping, but the fine for doing it was so low that companies found it more bottom-line friendly to dump their untreated wastewater and pay the fine. In this case, simply raising the fine to the point that dumping was more costly than using the treatment equipment already available was a straightforward, easy solution that did not dispel the attitudinal barrier of the profit motive but took advantage of it to identify a simple solution likely to achieve the desired results. Inherency analysis also can generate more dramatic, imaginative solutions that are responsive to the particular barriers identified. Thus, it is a practical tool available to reformers, radicals, and

conservatives alike as it tenders a selection of creative and promising solutions to a shared problem.

Finally, inherency analysis is useful for applied practitioners because it is so readily *teachable, and it should be taught*. This fact places a special responsibility on those of us who teach public speaking and especially argumentation and debate. It is our job as communication educators charged with empowering citizens for real-world public advocacy challenges to assure that students leave our classes intimately familiar with and excited about the how and why of inherency analysis because it is a lynch-pin to generating and advocating for successful and practical shared solutions. Katherine E. Rowan (1995) observed that too often basic communication and writing educators allow the introduction of common organizational formats (e.g., problem–solution, cause–effect) to substitute for teaching rhetorical invention more substantially (pp. 236–237, 239–241). Such standard patterns skip or at best gloss over the inherency analysis that could improve the chances of a practical solution. For the reasons demonstrated in this essay, argumentation and debate classes, too, need to make training in analyzing and advocating using all the stock issues—and particularly practicing the less intuitive skill of inherency analysis—central if they want to prepare effective citizen leaders with practical and generative tools for influencing and testing public policy decisions outside the classroom or competition arena. Inherency has gone out of fashion in the specialized arguments of competitive debate. If intercollegiate debate is to be and to justify itself as a key training ground for preparing effective citizen leaders in public advocacy, it would do well to reassert the importance of and competitively reward incisive inherency analysis (see also Olson, submitted). Inherency is a vitally relevant aspect of real public advocacy, not a dry formal requirement.

The beauty of the suggestion that stock issue, and particularly inherency, analysis should be more widely available and clearly applicable to citizens is that it does not require any further specialized research than our discipline already possesses. The tools have been well developed in our existing literature, and our familiarity with them can lead us to take for granted that they are equally obvious to all. What we need is the will to follow through and a sustained, vibrant effort to demonstrate the accessibility and versatility of these tools to our students and other citizens. The hunger for such practical tools for effective rhetorical leadership seems to be there on the part of the citizens. For example, linguist George Lakoff's (2004) brief book *Don't Think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate* is essentially an exercise in demonstrating how practically valuable one basic piece of symbolic theory could be for ordinary citizens with public concerns, and it became a *New York Times* bestseller. This illustrates that Americans can recognize the value and power of such theory for their everyday practice, if it is explained and its applicability demonstrated in an accessible but not oversimplified way. As communication scholars familiar with the practical value of inherency analysis to potential citizen leaders, it behooves us to make such theory accessible and engaging to a larger lay public.

## Conclusion

Goodnight et al. (1974) wrote that a policy case for change

that “defends itself” should be constructed so that inherency challenges may be incorporated within the case. . . . Thus, a sound analysis of inherency should establish the structural gaps and barriers at the outset of the debate forcing the [opponent] to confront the specific position rather than arguing for random repairs. (p. 235)

Hopefully, this essay has shown that the same is at least as true, and perhaps more true, for the more elusive, more nefarious attitudinal and philosophical barriers to change. With respect to education and social reform for the disadvantaged, we need citizen leaders who are both well-trained in the discipline of rhetoric and willing, like Anne Larcade, to take the risk to advocate publicly. Suzanne W. Morse (1992) explained our contemporary responsibility in *Innovative Higher Education*:

All too often the popular concept of leader has to do with people who are in positions of power or moral authority. It eludes the situations and people who need it most; those who carry on the business of living, working, guiding families, and making society work. No president, prime minister, or general can do that for us. (p. 71)

## Notes

- [1] The notion of the five stock issues as constituting a *prima facie* case that meets an affirmative burden of proof for policy change—that is, a case complete and strong enough on its face to require opponents to respond, although not necessarily to prevail in the end—rests in long-standing norms for managing risk and responsibilities in real-world advocacy. Change of any sort always carries risk. Thus, however sound or flawed, the existing system has presumption, and the advocate of any proposed change has the burden of proof in an argument. That is, the present system preoccupies the ground and, even if only by inertia, probably will continue in place until successfully challenged by an advocate of change; unless a proponent for policy change can mount sufficient arguments on the stock issues to challenge the present system with a viable alternative, those who favor the existing system need not actively defend it.

Having presumption, then, does not imply any judgment about a position’s relative desirability or truth. As nineteenth-century scholar and churchman Richard Whately (1828/1963) so elegantly explained:

Thus, it is a well-known principle of the Law, that every man (including a prisoner brought up for trial) is to be *presumed* innocent till his guilt is established. This does not, of course, mean that we are to *take for granted* he is innocent; for if that were the case, he would be entitled to immediate liberation: nor does it mean that it is antecedently *more likely than not* that he is innocent; or, that the majority of these brought to trial are so. It evidently means only that the “burden of proof” lies with the accusers;—that he is not to be called on to prove his innocence, or to be dealt with as a criminal till he has done so; but that they are to bring their charges against him, which if he can repel, he stands acquitted. (pp. 112–113)

So it is with policy cases where the fact that the existing system has presumption provides neither a quality evaluation nor a prediction of the debate's outcome once an advocate for change presents a *prima facie* case. Establishing "sunset clauses" when initiating laws or institutions is an attempt to thwart the inertia created by presumption or preoccupation of the ground, by requiring that proponents of that law or institution assume an affirmative burden of proof at a future point to justify its continued existence.

- [2] Fuller explanations of these stock issues and their relationships are available in most argumentation texts. For example, good discussions can be found in Ziegelmueller and Kay (1997, pp. 172–178) and Patterson and Zarefsky (1983, pp. 126–140).
- [3] For a strong refutation of the "floodgates" argument (i.e., that bowing to public pressure on this issue would open the "floodgates" to a stream of other requests and "misuses" of the child welfare system), see Marin (2005, pp. 29–33, 40–41).
- [4] When Ontario's provincial government steadfastly refused to follow the law and offer other parents the same terms that it finally gave Larcade (i.e., not requiring her to give up permanent custody in order to receive help for her son), the families, led by Larcade, mounted a \$500-million class-action lawsuit. It became the first time a Canadian court certified a class action over the government's improper cancellation of a benefits program, claimed Larcade's lawyer Doug Elliot ("Parents," 2005). Still, the Attorney General appealed on the grounds that parents have no right to sue the province for negligence ("Canada: Government's Decision," 2005).
- [5] Inherency is such an elusive and complex issue that it is often misunderstood even by experts. For example, Kruger (1965) took to task a colleague (Newman, 1965) for consistently misusing the notion. Two of the more important missteps that Kruger found in Newman's essay were the assumptions that the immediacy of a significant ill was part of inherency and that existing or potential ills' apparentness to the policy-making audience was part of inherency (Kruger, pp. 109–110; Newman, p. 66). Zarefsky (1969) advanced the discussion with arguments that the need to prove inherency does not depend, as some infer, on whether the significant ill is current or impending or on whether the defect is an evil to be eliminated or a potential benefit not yet realized (pp. 13, 18). He further showed that inherency analysis occurs because something other than a mere quantitative change in the current way of doing things (e.g., more staff or money for existing programs) is needed to solve the problem (pp. 13–14). Given this stock issue's complexity, Patterson and Zarefsky (1983) enumerated other questions that inherency *does not* pose for policy advocates, questions such as "What brought the problem into existence in the first place?" or "Why has the proposed change not yet been adopted?" adding: "Rather, the issue focuses on why we must affirm the resolution [i.e., proposed policy change] in order to be able to solve the problem" (p. 131).
- [6] Cherwitz and Hikins (1977) proposed a detailed plan for a thorough policy analysis of inherency that parallels Aristotle's four causes of natural phenomena (i.e., formal, final, material, and efficient) as laid out in the *Physics* and *Metaphysics* (p. 83). For policy matters, they equated the "formal" cause to the institutions, laws, mores, and traditions that preclude solution of the problem, the "final" cause to the attitudes or motives that entrench and ensure the perpetuation of the formal cause and so preclude the current system's self-repair, the "efficient" cause to the general or on-balance existing implementation—counter-examples or counter-attitudes being shown to be insignificant or infrequent exceptions—of the "formal" and "final" causes, and the "material" cause to the inability of alternative aspects of or competing avenues in the existing system (i.e., those not operating within the province of the institutions examined by the inherency claim) to solve the problem without the proposed change (pp. 85–89). "What makes a problem truly inherent," they concluded, "is the point at which attitude, structure, implementation, and means merge. In short, it is only the bringing together of final, formal, efficient, and material cause that attests to the status quo's inherent incapacity to rectify a problem" (p. 89).

- [7] Newman (1965), unhelpfully to real-world policy advocates, I believe, argued that, as long as the proviso “in theory” is added, any system’s structure *could* be changed (pp. 67–68). Such a position overlooks the power of attitudinal and philosophical inherency detailed here—concepts, in fairness, articulated subsequent to Newman publishing his essay.
- [8] One of the grounds on which Henry A. Giroux (1995) recommends Purpel and Shapiro’s (1995) work is their concern for linking these values, rather than setting them in competition with each other, and for providing “concrete strategies” for education reforms that take the complex underlying relationships into account (p. xi).
- [9] The cabinet-level U.S. Department of Education was established in 1980, ending the education role of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; upon taking office in 1981, President Ronald Reagan vowed to eliminate the department (Mantel, 2005, pp. 479, 481).
- [10] For instance, the G.I. Bill of Rights, one of the most far-reaching innovations in U.S. higher education, was driven by a desire to absorb the huge numbers of soldiers being discharged after World War II so as not to drive up unemployment and hurt the economy (and other individuals’ economic welfare), rather than by some loftier motive (Halperin & Clark, 1990, pp. 19–20; Keppel, 1990, p. 9). A noble result indeed can emerge from a policy decision otherwise motivated, and skilled advocates can help that happen.

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