

Introduction

IN 1971, PRESIDENT NIXON vetoed legislation that would have created federal funding for the care of children under five. His veto message stated, “for the Federal Government to plunge headlong financially into supporting child development would commit the vast moral authority of the National Government to the side of communal approaches to child rearing over against [*sic*] the family-centered approach” (Veto of the Economic Opportunity Amendments of 1971). With this veto, Nixon reaffirmed that, with the exception of poor children, the education and care of children is the responsibility of families, not government. But flash forward thirty years and state governments are going where the federal government dared not tread. Currently forty-one states and the District of Columbia provide some form of state-funded preschool. Nearly a quarter of those states have removed income limits on participation, thereby opening up the potential for publicly funded preschool for all. For fiscal year 2008, twenty-nine governors recommended funding increases for preschool programs and no governors recommended decreases in funding (Pre-K Now 2007). How did responsibility for early childhood education move from a private responsibility of families to a public responsibility? Why did states decide that early education, in particular the education of preschool-age children, is the state’s responsibility?

At the heart of this shift from private to public responsibility is segmenting preschool-age children from younger children and reframing them as a separate target group. Historically, children are constructed as dependent, meaning that they are deserving of benefits but have weak political power, and their condition is seen as “natural” and better served by private sector alternatives (Schneider and Ingram 1997). President Nixon’s veto reflects this view. Policies targeted toward dependent groups are typically paternalistic with eligibility rules to participate in programs, less outreach, more responsibility on the dependent to seek out the program, and greater

reliance on hortatory tools that do not cost money (Schneider and Ingram 1997). This accurately describes federal policies for the care and education of low-income children under five over the last forty years. Federal policies (described below) set strict eligibility standards for participation and parents must navigate complex bureaucratic systems to attain services for their children. The status quo in the United States is that poor families are eligible for publicly-funded child care and preschool services but families with incomes above eligibility limits either make informal arrangements or purchase care in the private market. In other words, child care and preschool¹ for families below the income limits is a “public problem” but child care and preschool for families above the income limits is a “private problem.” Given this context, how has the education of preschool-age children (i.e., three and four year olds) been framed by policy entrepreneurs to make it advantageous for state actors to support state-funded programs open to all children regardless of family income?

To understand this process, one place to start is to analyze how states were able to successfully pass legislation to create universal preschool programs. Between 1995 and 2002, four states passed legislation to create universal preschool programs. Georgia was the first state in 1995, quickly followed by New York in 1997, Oklahoma in 1998, and West Virginia in 2002. What becomes evident in the analysis of the “pioneer” states in this book is that passing universal preschool legislation was an internal process; pioneering states passed their legislation largely independent of the influence of nonstate actors and with little media attention. There was cross fertilization of ideas through membership organizations, such as the National Governors Association, but the impetus for the change came from state actors who maneuvered through a state policy process devoid of national actors pressing for or against the issue.

The policy processes for more recent states has changed significantly. One catalyst for change in state policy-making occurred in December 2001, when the Pew Charitable Trusts announced a new giving program specifically aimed to create universal preschool for all three and four year olds. Over the next few years, Pew implemented a comprehensive, well-funded strategy for advancing universal preschool policy change, particularly at the state level. Rather than a traditional strategy of providing grants for research to universities or policy planning organizations (i.e., think tanks) (Dye 1990, 2001), Pew chose to fund a network of actors that would advocate for a specific policy alternative: universal preschool for all three and four year olds. What emerged was a complex network of Pew-funded actors attempting to frame the “problem” of school readiness so that the policy solution was investment in universal preschool. One of the striking aspects of Pew’s decision-making process is the reliance on

tools more often found in the business sector than foundations. Pew's staff identified a goal that had a clearly measurable outcome and put in place a comprehensive strategy for achieving it.

Why Universal Preschool?

There are three commonly cited factors that contributed to the rise of universal preschool in pioneer states and Pew's decision to invest in universal preschool: (1) absence of federal policy action, (2) emerging research on the importance of early brain development, and (3) publicity surrounding longitudinal studies of preschool participation.

Federal Policy

Currently there are three main policies to provide federal funds for the education and care of young children: the Head Start Preschool program, child care subsidies for low-income families, and subsidies for special needs children. Head Start was established as one of several programs authorized by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, an initiative of President Johnson's War on Poverty. The goal of the program was to lift children out of poverty by providing them with the necessary physical, emotional, social, and academic skills to enter school ready to learn. The program targeted, and continues to target, children living below the federal poverty line. The program, administered through the Department of Health and Human Services, provides federal grants for preschool education and comprehensive intervention services to low-income and special needs children. However, like many of the federal programs at that time, it bypassed state governments and provided Head Start funds directly to a locally designated grantee, typically a nonprofit community action agency. Bypassing the white power structure of the state governments was a federal strategy in the 1960s to empower black communities to improve their economic conditions (Judd and Swanstrom 2006). While this was necessary at the time, it set in motion a separation between the state government and Head Start programs that would prove troublesome when state governments began their own preschool programs (to be discussed in chapter 3).

In the midst of the civil rights struggle and massive federal expansion, child advocates, notably Marian Wright Edelman, advocated for federal child care legislation. Between 1968 and May 1971, congressional support increased for a federal child care program. By 1971, broad bipartisan support

led to passage of a bill to create a framework for a universally available, comprehensive child care program. The program would have been federally funded, with family contributions along a sliding-scale based on income. Despite its passage in the legislature, the controversial bill was opposed by conservatives who felt that it threatened the values of personal liberty and limited government, and by many state governors who opposed an administrative structure that bypassed the states and placed control over the program at the local level. Amid the controversy over both ideology and structure, Nixon vetoed the bill in 1971. Even though the bill failed, it marked the first time that the federal government had considered a child care program on its own merits (Cohen 2001).

Since President Nixon's veto in 1971, child care advocates made little headway in advancing their agenda at the federal level. Efforts toward federal funding of comprehensive, universal child care were blocked and replaced with federal support for targeted programs. Child care advocates attempted to create federal regulatory requirements for child care, the Federal Interagency Day Care Requirements, but national standards were eventually rejected because of the costs associated with both compliance and enforcement. The only advances in federal funding for child care were for programs tied to welfare. In 1974, President Ford signed Title XX of the Social Security Act, which provided federal funds to the states for social services to residents. The use of Title XX funds was left to the discretion of the states, but child care provision was explicitly established as an allowable use of funds. Under Title XX's income eligibility requirements, only low-income individuals and families could receive benefits.² After this, no major changes occurred for over a decade.

The 1990 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act contained allocations for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and the At-Risk Child Care Program under Title IV-A of the Social Security Act. These programs were, and continue to be, targeted toward low-income families with working parents; the Child Care and Development Block Grant is limited to children in families with income below 75 percent of the state median income, and At-Risk Child Care is limited to families at-risk of becoming welfare-dependent.

Federal provision of child care rose on the national agenda again in 1996 during intense debates over welfare reform. Congress dramatically reformed the nation's welfare system with the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 (PRWOA). This landmark legislation replaced the prior system of income-supports to enable mothers to stay at home with their children, with a system requiring parents to work. PRWOA forced states to require both parents in a two-parent family to

work in order to be eligible for PRWOA funds, with the exception of disability, the presence of a child under the age of one, or lack of access to child care; however, states could allow mothers with children under six to work twenty hours per week (Cohen 2001). Because the federal government required parents to work, it then had to increase federal aid for child care. It is important to note that while federal policy interventions in the 1960s sought to lift children out of poverty, the purpose of federal grants after PRWOA was to support the welfare-to-work movement.

The only federal early childhood program without income eligibility rules targets a separate group: special needs children. The Individual with Disabilities Education Act requires public schools to provide preschool services for special needs children (United States Department of Education 2007). The federal government distributes a formula-based grant to school systems to arrange education for special needs preschool children. States can deliver the services themselves or contract with an education provider. In response to the federal mandate to provide special needs preschool, some states admit non-special needs children into their preschool programs. Public schools are allowed to charge tuition for non-special needs children while the parents of special needs children do not pay tuition. In fiscal year 2006, the federal government spent approximately \$350 million on special needs preschool education (United States Department of Education 2007).

The Head Start preschool program, child care subsidies, and special needs preschool firmly limit federal funding to low-income and special needs target groups. Several attempts to expand federal policy beyond care for these target groups have been unsuccessful. In Sally Cohen's book, *Championing Child Care*, she analyzes three waves of federal legislative activity and concludes that there is little potential for federal policy expansion (2001). Longtime early childhood advocates agree and, while advocacy for federal change continues, there is widespread agreement to target state policy change (Zigler, Gilliam, and Jones 2006, 279).

Early Brain Research

The importance of the first three years of life was brought into sharp focus starting in the late 1980s, with the emergence of new studies in early brain development (Zigler, Gilliam, and Jones 2006). Improvements in technology and tools used to study the brain led to research with clear implications for early childhood education (Carnegie Corporation of New York 1994). Researchers discovered that stages of brain development

occur more quickly early in life—the brain is 70 percent developed by age one, and by age three it has reached 90 percent of its total growth (Shore 1997). Some of this development happens during the prenatal period and the structure and wiring of the brain at birth are a function of genetics and biology. In the first months and years of life, the interplay between biology and experience, between nature and nurture, affects the course of brain development (Shonkoff and Phillips 2000). Since the activity level in the brain of a three year old is two and a half times greater than in that of an adult, stimulation during this period is critical. There are a greater number of synaptic connections in a young child's brain, and childhood experiences determine which of the neurons will create nerve networks that are the foundation for some sensory, language, and emotional development. Neurons that do not become part of the brain's wiring at this stage die (Shore 1997).

Different regions of the brain mature at different times and the coordination of stimulation with the developmental time-table is important. Missing the opportunity to establish neural connections can result in permanent deficiency (Lindsey 1998; Shore 1997). However, the concept of "critical periods" should not be overstated, since the plasticity that leaves the brain vulnerable to harm also allows the brain to progress at any age (Shonkoff and Phillips 2000). At all stages of growth, positive, nurturing relationships with caregivers are an essential component of brain development.

Public and private institutions and advocacy groups concerned with early childhood health, development, and education embraced these new scientific findings. In 1994, the Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children released *Starting Points*, a report that located the scientific research in the context of the changing lives of American parents. The report argued that the combination of developmental, social, and political factors led to a "quiet crisis" for children and families, as well as for the national economy (Carnegie Corporation of New York 1994).

The Carnegie Corporation presented five critical findings of the brain research, intended to guide strategies targeting young children:

1. The brain development that takes place in the prenatal period and first years of life is more rapid and extensive than previously realized.
2. Brain development is much more vulnerable to environmental influence than ever before suspected.
3. The influence of early environment on brain development is long lasting.

4. The environment affects not only the number of brain cells and the number of connections among them, but also the way these connections are wired.
5. There is new scientific evidence for the negative impact of early stress on brain function (Carnegie Corporation of New York 1994).

In 1997, the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences formed the Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development. Chaired by Jack Shonkoff, this group of seventeen scientists analyzed research on the first five years of life in the neurobiological, behavioral, and social sciences. As a result, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development* was published in 2000 investigating the impact of early childhood experiences on brain development as well as on social relationships (Shonkoff and Phillips 2000). While parents, educators, and even policy makers may have assumed the central role of the childhood environment, this research provided evidence that high-quality early education and care programs would result in improved developmental outcomes for children.

Longitudinal Studies of Preschool Participation

Part of the strategic choice to invest in preschool is due to the emergence of longitudinal studies indicating economic returns from investment in preschool education. Three separate studies concluded that both children and society gain when children participate in high-quality preschool. From 1962 to 1967 the Perry Preschool Program in Ypsilanti, Michigan provided preschool for 123 low-income African-American children. The children were randomly assigned to either a program group ($n = 58$) or a control group ($n = 65$). An assessment of the participants at age twenty-seven, and again at age forty, found that Perry Preschool participants had higher earnings, were more likely to hold a job, had committed fewer crimes, and were more likely to have graduated from high school (Barnett 1996; Schweinhart et al. 2005). A key finding of the Perry Preschool Program was that for every dollar invested into preschool, the public benefit equals up to \$7.17. This became a frequently cited statistic by advocates for public investment in preschool.

The Abecedarian Project operated between 1972 and 1977 at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. The 111 participating children were also

primarily African American and low-income. The children were enrolled in the study shortly after birth and were randomly assigned to either the Abecedarian program or to a control group. Evaluations were conducted at program completion and at ages eight, twelve, fifteen, and twenty-one, and findings show benefits to the treatment group in educational attainment, lower need for special education services, and higher employment rates (Ramey and Campbell 1984, 1991; Campbell and Ramey 1994, 1995).

The Chicago Child-Parent Centers were originally developed in 1967, using federal Title I funds available to public schools serving low-income students. The research began after the program was in operation, so random assignment was not possible. Instead, a representative sample of 989 children was selected and compared to a similar group of 550 children. Children who participated in the Child-Parent Centers fared better than those in the comparison group in the areas of educational attainment, need for special education, and crime rates (Reynolds and Temple 2006, 1995; Reynolds et al. 1993).

Reynolds and Temple (2006) reviewed the cost-benefit analyses conducted on these studies. While there are differences between the preschool programs, some of which had significant impact on program cost, the economic benefits in the areas of earnings capacity, crime savings, and special education savings have been consistent across the studies. The public benefit per dollar invested varied between a low of \$2.69 for the Abecedarian project to a high of \$7.16 for the Perry Preschool Project (Reynold and Temple 2006, 49). The data analysis provides strong evidence for the social returns of increased investments in high-quality preschool programs for low-income children.

The combined factors of no federal policy action, emergence of early brain research, and findings from longitudinal preschool studies created a policy milieu in which policy entrepreneurs were able to successfully build support for policy change. The objective of this study is to analyze the policy change process in states that have passed universal preschool legislation. But because passing legislation does not automatically translate into a successful program, I also analyze the success and failure to stabilize budgetary and political support for the new program. The creation of universal preschool programs provides a rich opportunity to assess the policy process literature for its ability to explain the change process.

Policy Process Literature

Schneider and Ingram's (1997) method of categorizing target populations according to their political power (weaker, stronger) and their construc-

tion as deserving or undeserving accurately represents the federal policy environment for children. As discussed above, children have weak political power but are constructed as deserving. Because providing benefits to children is costly, policy tends to rely on rhetoric. Any burdensome policies for children tend to be by omission. In other words, policy does not exist and therefore is not noticed. One of the particularly amazing transitions addressed in this book, is the anomaly of the preschool-age children target group being awarded benefits, as opposed to rhetoric. As described above, there is a long history of funding programs for low-income children in the United States but the states studied in this book are committing to providing preschool for all children, regardless of family income. How did it become politically advantageous for elected officials to support preschool for all instead of preschool for some? The following section divides the literature into the main topics to be addressed in the analysis of state passage of universal preschool legislation and includes: Issue reconstruction, policy entrepreneurs, agenda setting and policy change, and policy stability.

Issue Reconstruction

Baumgartner and Jones state that *issue definition* is the “driving force in both stability and instability, primarily because issue definition has the potential for mobilizing the previously disinterested” (Baumgartner and Jones 1993, 16). Images are a combination of empirical information and emotive appeals that are evaluative and set the *tone*. In order to change the policy image, policy entrepreneurs must create a *causal story* (Stone 1997). The image of the issue must change from that of a private “misfortune to a public problem amenable to government solutions” (Baumgartner and Jones 1993, 28). But that still does not assure that the problem will be linked to a particular policy alternative. Policy entrepreneurs must ensure that their favored policy alternative is the one adopted once the “problem” emerges on the government agenda. Cobb and Elder state, “Those wishing to mobilize broad groups attempt to focus attention on highly emotional symbols of easily understood themes, while those with an interest in restricting the debate explain the same issues in other, more arcane and complicated ways” (Cited in Baumgartner and Jones 1993, 30). Similarly, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) place importance on the role of *core policy beliefs*, to attract actors into a coalition for change. A key issue to be explored in the chapters that follow is the process of issue reframing that resulted in attracting previously disinterested actors and ultimately policy passage.

Policy Entrepreneurs

The role of policy entrepreneurs is central to understanding policy change. Kingdon (1995) portrays policy entrepreneurs as having a willingness to invest resources in the hope of a return and wanting to promote their interests, values, or getting a thrill of being integral to the policy process. The entrepreneurs play a critical role in the “softening up” of the political environment. But for a policy entrepreneur to be heard, he or she must have: (1) some expertise in the area, an ability to speak for others, or authoritative decision-making position; (2) political connections or skilled in negotiation; and (3) persistence. A policy entrepreneur must be able to recognize an opportunity to couple his or her policy idea to a problem in order to have a chance at affecting the decision agenda. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) assume that actors are *instrumentally rational*, meaning that they seek to use information and other resources to achieve their goals, that goals are usually complex, and that an individual’s ability to perceive the world and to process that information is affected by cognitive biases and constraints. This means that on salient topics, actors’ perceptions are strongly filtered by their preexisting normative and perceptual beliefs. Drawing on prospect theory, they assume that actors weigh losses more heavily than gains, and that this leads actors to view adversaries as more powerful than they are. To understand actors’ goals, it is necessary to identify policy core beliefs, rather than assuming rational self-interest. This modeling of the individual is important for how coalitions behave. Because actors share policy core beliefs, there are decreased transactions costs in coordinating action. This is an important factor in overcoming collective action problems.

Mintrom (2000) develops a concept of the policy entrepreneur in which actors operate in a particular milieu that shapes the opportunities and actions open to policy entrepreneurs. To be successful, the entrepreneur must possess certain skills, such as social perceptiveness and the ability to move effectively across different social settings. But the key to his or her success is to be adept at framing the issue and choosing language that builds the support of others. An important aspect of the environment of the entrepreneur is that he or she is embedded within a milieu and at the same time has the skills to shape it; policy entrepreneurs must be able to understand the nature of the frames through which they and others view and come to recognize apparent policy problems. This ability provides the key to problem framing: the conscious effort to bring others to see problems in ways that are consistent with one’s own positions and policy goals (Mintrom 2000, 324).

While these three perspectives are complementary, the emphasis on issue reframing makes Mintrom's conceptualization of the policy entrepreneur particularly compelling for understanding universal preschool policy change. Prior to the 1990s, a separate issue definition for preschool did not exist. With the exception of low-income children, the education of preschool-age children was part of "child care." In order for pioneer states and the Pew Charitable Trusts to advance universal preschool, policy entrepreneurs had to reframe the issue definition from child care to preschool education. To be successful, policy entrepreneurs also had to reframe the problem so that universal preschool could be the logical policy solution.

Agenda Setting and Policy Change

To understand the rise of preschool on state agendas, we can draw on the multiple streams framework (Kingdon 1995; Zahariadis 2003) and the punctuated equilibrium model (Baumgartner and Jones 1993, 2002). In the multiple streams (MS) framework, three streams (problem, policy, and political) come together to open a window of opportunity for policy change. In the problem stream, ideas come from anywhere, every idea has a history, and nobody leads anybody else. Adapting the garbage can model to agenda setting, the process is characterized by "organized anarchies" with problematic preferences (goals are not clearly defined), unclear technology (processes are not well understood), and fluid participation (actors drift in and out). In the policy stream, Kingdon (1995) identified policy communities made up of specialists both inside government (staffers, bureaucrats) and outside (academics, consultants, analysts for interest groups). They can be fragmented or focused but they operate in a different stream than the political stream. The policy community devises the short list of ideas but the criteria for the idea's survival are technical feasibility, value acceptability, and anticipation of future constraints (e.g., effect on the budget).

But even with the problem and policy streams joined, the key to opening a policy window is joining with the political³ stream. When the three streams join together, the probability of an item rising on the decision agenda dramatically increases (Kingdon 1995, 178). The political stream is affected by the swings in the pendulum of national mood, organized political forces, turnover and turf battles in government, and consensus. Whereas in the policy stream consensus is reached through persuasion, in the political stream consensus is the result of bargaining and bandwagon effects.

Kingdon likens the opening of the policy window to riding a wave. When it opens the policy entrepreneurs have an opportunity to move their issue onto the decision agenda. In this conception policy entrepreneurs are much like tigers who lie in wait ready to pounce on their prey. They have their alternative ready to go and when a problem comes up they pounce to couple it to their policy alternative.

The joining of the three streams opens a policy window in which change is possible. Policy windows may open due to changes in the political stream (e.g., change in administration, shift in distribution of seats, national mood) or problem stream (e.g., focusing event). But windows also close because: (1) participants may feel that some action has been taken and the pressure is off; (2) participants may fail to get action; (3) the focusing event fades; (4) key personnel may change; or (5) no viable alternative is found. The occurrence of windows can be predictable such as the reauthorization of legislation, the result of a spillover effect from another policy area, or seemingly random. Kingdon states, "Government does not come to conclusions. It stumbles into paradoxical situations that force it to move one way or another" (1995, 189). However, as he clarifies in the second edition, there are structures and forces that place bounds on the process, which make it less random than it may appear.

One of the issues raised by the MS framework is the degree to which the streams are independent. In the original version published in 1984 the streams are described as developing independently. In the 1995 edition, Kingdon uses the term "loosely coupled" to describe joining of streams. Zahariadis (2003) contributes nuance to the process but maintains that the streams are separate, yet often interconnected. The political and policy streams may weave together at various times but in the MS framework the actors and the processes are "in the main" different. The MS framework was developed by Kingdon through a study of agenda setting at the federal level and Zahariadis's work focuses on Western European contexts, but preschool policy change is occurring at the state level. For preschool policy change, the relevant questions raised by the MS framework are (1) the identification of actors in each of the three streams, (2) the degree to which the streams are independent, and (3) whether the opening of the policy window was the result of three streams converging.

In some cases, universal preschool policy change at the state level is incremental but for others it moved quickly onto the decision agenda and was created with little opposition. To explain such different experiences for universal preschool policy change, Baumgartner and Jones's (1993, 2002) punctuated equilibrium model (PEM) is particularly useful. This model explains why there are periods of stability and also periods of dramatic change in policy making. Baumgartner and Jones hypothesize that if

there is a general principle of policy action in place, policy making tends toward incrementalism. But if there is a new principle under consideration, then policy-making tends to be volatile. On the federal level, the volatile policy making process that culminated in Nixon's 1971 presidential veto was the result of the introduction of a new policy principle: federal funding of child care for all children. The root cause of volatility was the attempt to redefine child care from a private responsibility to a public one.

In the PEM, the timing of policy change is a function of an S-shaped curve. Similar to the policy diffusion logistic growth curve, negative feedback occurs at either end but in the middle positive feedback results in rapid change. When policy entrepreneurs invest resources into a process with negative feedback it results in smaller marginal effects; however, if they invest resources in a process with positive feedback it results in larger marginal effects. A key issue for policy entrepreneurs is to identify opportunities for positive feedback to increase their success in achieving policy change.

For federal policy, the policy window for expanding early childhood policies has remained closed for a decade. Any investment of resources would yield negative feedback. The status quo of targeted early childhood programs does not appear to have any opportunity for positive feedback leading to a policy window on the horizon. But policy windows at the state level have opened and policy change has occurred. A key issue to be explored in the policy change for preschool is what led to universal preschool rising on the S-curve so that positive feedback was possible.

Policy Stability

Baumgartner and Jones (1993) state that, when volatile change occurs, it can be achieved in the absence of counter mobilization. Contrary to pluralist models of countervailing forces, waves of enthusiasm sweep through the political system as political actors become convinced of the value of some new policy, often in the absence of serious opposing voices. But after the policy change occurs, it does not necessarily establish the political support to ensure its survival. In order for it to survive as the new status quo, it has to achieve stability.

Central to the PEM is the concept of a "policy monopoly." A policy monopoly has a definable institutional structure that is responsible for policy making supported by a powerful idea that is associated with the institutional structure. The structure serves to limit access from outsiders to the policy process through the formal or informal rules of access. This

is possible because the prevalent understandings of the policy are so positive that they evoke only support or indifference by those not involved (thereby ensuring their continued noninvolvement). These policy ideas are generally connected to core political values that can be communicated directly and simply through image and rhetoric such as progress, fairness, and economic growth—things no one taken seriously in the political system can contest. If a group can convince others that their activities serve such lofty goals, then it may be able to create a policy monopoly.

In the PEM, “stability is enforced through a complex system of mutually noninterfering policy monopolies buttressed by powerful support images” (Baumgartner and Jones 1993, 15). Stability may be maintained over long periods of time by the existing structure of political institutions and the issue definition processed by those institutions. It is issue definition and institutional control combined that make possible the alternation between stability and rapid change in political systems. For this reason, policy monopolies try to maintain a single understanding of the issue definition in which there is support for the positive image and a rejection of competing images.

But they also must prevent destabilization of the institutional structure. Baumgartner and Jones use the term “policy venue” to refer to “the institutional locations where authoritative designs are made concerning a given issue” (1993, 32). While the choice of venue impacts the way in which a policy image is received, there are no immutable rules that spell out which institutions in society must be charged with making decisions. It could be assigned to a public agency, private market, federal or state legislators, the courts, private individuals, or families, and so on. Policy venues can change over time and, if they do, during these moments, dramatic policy changes often result.

Baumgartner and Jones emphasize the dynamic nature of policy monopolies. They state, “The degree to which problems are tightly linked to images is related to the degree to which a single arena of policymaking exerts monopolistic control over a policy. Where images are in flux, one may also expect changes in institutional jurisdictions. Conversely, where venues change, the terms of the debate may be altered still further. Where venues are tightly controlled, on the other hand, changes in image are less likely; where changes in image are ruled out, the odds of effecting changes in venue are correspondingly lower” (Baumgartner and Jones 1993, 38). For universal preschool, the PEM leads us to examine the political struggle to create and maintain a positive policy image and to control the venue in order to create a policy monopoly.

The PEM focuses on the conditions for achieving stability of the policy monopoly but contributions from Sabatier, Jenkins-Smith and col-

leagues (particularly Sabatier, 1988 and 1999; Jenkins-Smith, and Sabatier, 1993) can be drawn upon to understand the network of actors supporting the policy monopoly. They develop the concept of “advocacy coalitions” consisting of actors who (1) share a particular belief system—that is, a set of basic values, causal assumptions, and problem perceptions and (2) show a nontrivial degree of coordinated activity over time (Sabatier 1999, 138). Shared policy core beliefs are not easily changed and include basic causes of the problem, method of financing programs, and desirability of participation by public versus experts versus elected officials. They are systemwide, salient policy preferences that are a source of ongoing cleavage (Sabatier 1999). In this framework, policy core beliefs are the glue that holds the advocacy coalition together. Actors will give up secondary aspects (beliefs not shared systemically) before acknowledging weaknesses in the core.

While the advocacy coalition literature tends to focus on mature advocacy coalitions that have been trying to influence policy for a decade or more, it can be used to understand the strong commitment to universal preschool across a wide array of actors. In mature coalitions, the participants regard themselves as a semiautonomous community who share a domain of expertise and there are specialized subunits within agencies at all relevant levels of government to deal with the topic. Externally there are interest groups that regard this as a major topic (Sabatier 1999). This is in contrast to nascent subsystems that may emerge because (1) a group of actors becomes dissatisfied with the subsystem’s attention to a problem, or (2) a new issue or new conceptualization of a situation arises. On major controversies within a mature policy subsystem, when policy core beliefs are in dispute, the lineup of allies and opponents tends to be rather stable over periods of time. To change the policy core attributes requires significant changes in socioeconomic conditions, public opinion, systemwide governing coalitions, or policy outputs from other subsystems. But not all perturbations will result in policy change.

The main difference between advocacy coalitions and policy monopolies is the degree to which the commitment to a particular policy image or policy core belief is internalized. For policy monopolies, policy ideas are connected to core political values that can be communicated directly and simply through image and rhetoric. They are constructed to achieve policy change and then maintained in order to exert monopoly power over the policy. For advocacy coalitions, policy core beliefs are internalized by the actors involved. A mature advocacy coalition maintains core beliefs regardless of whether the image of those core beliefs leads to monopoly power over the policy process.

The policy process literature suggests that in order to understand the creation of universal preschool policy change, we need to consider framing, policy windows and policy change, and the process to achieve stability for universal preschool policies. Most of the policy process literature was developed through empirical research at the federal level. The MS framework was developed through Kingdon's study of federal transportation and health policy-making. Baumgartner and Jones's PEM was developed through analysis of longitudinal media data. Sabatier and colleagues's advocacy coalition framework, with a few exceptions, was developed through federal policy research. Only Mintrom's policy entrepreneur concept was the result of state research; he studied the creation of state school choice policies. Analyzing universal preschool policy change provides an opportunity to assess the explanatory power of these contributions at the state level.

Book Overview

The main focus of this study is on explaining the anomaly of a dependent group, preschool-age children, being awarded costly benefits, a rarity in public policy. The study analyzes the change process in six states: Georgia, New York, Oklahoma, West Virginia, Tennessee, and Illinois. In chapter 2, I explore the policy change process of the four "pioneer states" to identify the role of policy entrepreneurs in reframing preschool from "babysitting" to early childhood education and the process leading up to the policy change.

All the states included in the study passed legislation that created the potential for universal access; however, few states have actually achieved that in practice. For this reason, chapter 3 is an analysis of the success and failure of the "pioneer" states of Georgia, New York, Oklahoma, and West Virginia, in attaining political and budgetary stability for their preschool programs. The experiences of these states vary tremendously and it sheds light on the explanatory power of PEM.

The more recent states of Illinois and Tennessee vary from the pioneer states in one important respect: investment by the Pew Charitable Trusts and Pew-funded actors in the policy change process. None of the literature discussed in the prior section addresses the role of foundations in the policy process. For that we have to turn to elite power theorists such as Dye (1979) and Domhoff (1998) who explain policy making as a function of the power of elites in society. Foundations are elite institutions; they exist because wealthy individuals and families created them. However, the role that Pew Charitable Trusts is playing in advancing state policy change is not adequately represented by elite power theorists. Chapter 4 explores the role of

the Pew Charitable Trusts in achieving its stated goal of universal preschool for all three- and four-year-olds. After describing the history of Pew and its shift over time to advancing specific policy alternatives, the discussion shifts to an analysis of the creation of the universal preschool giving program. Pew's strategy for advancing policy change is comprehensive and brilliantly executed. It has established a strategic network of organizations who all share a core policy belief: public investment in universal preschool will yield public benefits. The external resources that Pew brings to states and the strategies with which it advances the universal preschool policy alternative sheds new light on the role of foundations in policy processes.

Chapter 5 analyzes the impacts of the Pew Charitable Trusts on state policy-making. Pew and Pew-funded actors invest in a great number of states with the goal of advancing policy change but Illinois and Tennessee are the two states that have successfully passed legislation.⁴ The policy-making processes in these two states benefited from external resources that were unavailable to the pioneer states. Through an analysis of the strategic investment by Pew and Pew-funded actors, it provides the opportunity to assess the impact of external resources on state policy processes and compare it to state policy-making in the internally resourced pioneer states. Chapter 5 also includes a discussion of Pew and Pew-funded actors' investment in the pioneer state of New York, the only pioneer state that has received significant Pew investment after the policy change process. After New York passed its legislation in 1997, the funding for the preschool program was politically controversial. For nearly a decade, the preschool program did not achieve a stable policy monopoly. When Pew and Pew-funded actors began investing in New York, it provided the resources that culminated with an increase in funding for the program. Combined with the election of a new governor committed to the preschool program, New York made strides in making the program universally accessible.

The final chapter synthesizes findings and assesses their contributions for understanding policy processes. In addition to theoretical contributions, the chapter explores the meaning of the answers to the questions of who, what, where, and how universal preschool emerges in states. But it also raises additional questions about the role of foundations in a democracy, the potential for "tangled outcomes," and the future of universal preschool when Pew funding ends.

Methodology

The case selection was limited to states that passed legislation with universal access. I am expressly interested in explaining the anomaly of the uni-

versal preschool policy change process, which means that I included the states who were the first in the country to pass the legislation allowing for universal access. Many other states are leaders in early childhood because they have created high-quality, targeted preschool programs, such as North Carolina, but I was expressly interested in the decision to pass legislation allowing for universal access. To control for venue, I only included states that passed legislation. I omitted states such as Florida because the universal preschool program was created through the initiative process and New Jersey because the program was created through the courts (and is not state wide). As is the case with many natural experiments, there were no identified cases of failure; however, there is important variation in (1) the success and failure of pioneer states to achieve stability for their preschool programs and (2) the impact of the Pew Charitable Trusts in the policy change process.

Understanding the policy change process required a mixed methodology. I reviewed print sources including archival government documents, research reports, advocacy publications, newspaper coverage, and relevant Web sites; however, in some states there were few print sources available. For example, coverage of the policy change process by the newspaper for the capital region in Oklahoma was virtually nonexistent. Because of the scarcity of sources, the print source data were combined with interviews with a wide range of actors including elected officials and their staff, government agency personnel, journalists, child advocates, child care industry advocates, public school officials and advocates, and university researchers. These interviews were conducted in person or by phone from 2005 to 2007. To understand the role of the Pew Charitable Trusts, I relied on interviews with Pew staff and grantees, review of Internal Revenue Service 990 forms to identify grant history, and an exhaustive review of the interconnected Web sites of Pew grantees. Only through the combination of interviews with print sources was it possible to develop a reliable account of the sequence of events and the roles of various actors that eventually resulted in policy change for the six states and policy stability in the four pioneer states.