Discussion Questions

March 21

From Heck:

1) According to Heck, what are the components of the concept of culture?
   • “The concept of culture has both an ideological component and a sociological one. The ideological component is comprised of ideological beliefs and values, whereas the sociological component includes customs, institutions, rules, and patterns of behavior.” [p.81]

2) What is at the center of political life in a democracy?
   • “…conflict is at the center of political life in a democracy.” [p.81]

3) What role do ideological beliefs play in policy problems and solutions?
   • “Ideological beliefs help define policy problems and their accepted solutions. A case in point is Americans’ prolonged belief in education to resolve the nation’s social ills.” [p. 81]
   • A cultural perspective tends to focus our attention on the movement of idea; that is, how ideas develop, gain support, and become influential over time.” [p.82]

4) What is the relationship between educational policies and cultural values? [p.82]
   • “Educational policies are explicit expressions of underlying cultural values.” [p.82]

5) Why does policymaking primarily reflect state political traditions?
   • “…because education is a state function, patterns of activity develop over time that reflect state policymaking preferences. State governments have their own unique political traditions.” [p. 82]

6) What is the definition of political culture?
   • “Political culture has been defined as the collective beliefs and values of policymakers and citizens about how political institutions and policy processes work, about the role of each institution in the policy process, and the proper rules of the game.” [p.83]

7) The Founders held primary ideological principles, what were they? [p.83]
   • “individualism– the right of the people to pursue their own self-interests and own well-being.
   • Economic self-interest– the individual’s right to act in her or his self-interest in acquiring economic resources without government interference. (represented by support for the free-market economic system).”
• “liberty and personal freedom— the right to pursue self-improvement without government interference. Liberty was an important value underlying the addition of the Bill of Rights. Liberty assumed a structure of institutions and rules that defined rights and duties which balanced personal freedom.”

• “equality— the equal right of all citizens to participate in society and the political process. Ensuring due process (as represented by the 5th Amendment) and equal protection under the law to individuals and groups (formalized under the 14th Amendment) regarding issues as gender equity, civil rights, and appropriate educational opportunity) has been a value often pursued by the courts.”

• “fraternity, or brotherhood. Developing a sense of community was essential to Jefferson’s view of democracy. For example, one way this played out in educational policymaking during the Municipal Reform of the 1890s to 1920s was the creation of a melting pot ideology (or common American identity) for immigrants through education.”

• “Order as a general social principle underlies American society and many educational policies to assure Americans safe schools.”

• Instructor’s Notes— The Founders put off dealing with the issue of the well-being of the African American slave.

• Founders did foresee large corporations.

8) What is accomplished by Elazar’s Typology of State Political Cultures? What are they?
• “Elazar developed a typology of three distinctive state political cultures that were useful in explaining differences in states’ political behavior.” [p.87]

9) How do differing state political cultures impact upon educational policy activity?
• “Tests of Elazar’s typology yielded differences in a wide array of state behavior including party competition, legislators’ attitudes toward social and economic welfare issues, and the extent of state control of local schools.” [p.88]

10) What are core policy values? What are they?
• “A second proposition derived from the political cultural lens is that different political cultures should pursue different ideological values.
• Choice— Freedom to choose; liberty.
• Quality-- policies enhance life
• Efficiency– economic control/ accountability
• Equity– Ensuring equal opportunity. [p.90]
11) What did Horace Mann see as the primary role of education?
   • "Horace Mann strove for free public education as a means of uplifting citizens economically...Toward this goal came the public financing of education and compulsory attendance laws." [p.93]

12) In Hawaii, what role did schooling play in the culture?
   • Native Hawaiians sought to protect their indigenous culture from the domination of English-speaking American values as promoted by Christian missionaries. [p. 94-98]

From Spring:
1) What four points of conservative political agenda were implemented in Houston?
   • (1) State-wide testing
   • (2) phonics instruction
   • (3) charter schools
   • (4) privatization of non-academic services. [p. 157]

2) What has been the pattern of hiring of big-city superintendents?
   • The big-city tendency in hiring school superintendents has been to look outside of the ranks of professional educators and hire leaders from the military, corporations, politicians, government bureaucrats, religious leaders, lawyers, and even former school board members. [p.158]

3) According to a national survey what is the make up of school boards nationally?
   • 60% were men
   • 95% were white
   • 40% were between 41-50 years old
   • 54% described as religious conservatives
   • 65% described as political conservatives
   • >40% family incomes $40k-$80K per year
   • [p.159]

4) What are Spring four categories of power structure?
   • (1) Dominated
5) What was at issue in Kanawha County, West Virginia?
   - A religious conservative minority sought to control what textbooks were used.
   - Points out the effectiveness of an extremely well-organized group can have an impact on policy far in excess of their representation within the community and the number of children they place in schools. [p.167]

6) How does a superintendent shape policy where he/she controls the school board?
   - Superintendents occupy strategic gatekeeping positions.
   - Superintendents control the agenda for board meetings.
   - Superintendents control the flow of information. [p.173]

7) (a) How do teachers’ unions influence educational policy? (b) What issues dominate conflict?
   - (a) Teacher unions negotiate contracts which determine salaries.
   - (b) Salaries and working conditions dominate conflicts involving teacher unions. [p.176-177]

8) What is site-based management? Who does it threaten?
   - “Site-based management involves teachers, students, community members, and school administrators in shared decision making about the management of individual schools.”
   - It threatens the power of school administrators.