Special Section: Gender, Power and Use of evidence in policy

Funny Evidence: Female Comics are the New Policy Entrepreneurs

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The last decade has seen on-going issues of gender inequity as well as arguably the golden age of female comics. From Tina Fey and Amy Poehler’s renditions of Sarah Palin and Hillary Clinton in 2008, to Amy Schumer’s critique of US college rape culture, this is an extraordinary time to consider the role of female comics in policy making. This article will examine this period by locating these comedic skills within the policy entrepreneur literature. First, it will review policy entrepreneurship elements; secondly it will propose a framework for policy entrepreneurship that builds on intersectional feminist principles. Lastly, it will apply the framework to female comic’s influence on political issues. In all, we argue that female comics can serve as policy entrepreneurs in public administration by using their identity to locate themselves as relevant actors, attaching solutions to problems, biasing political outcomes, benefiting from their engagement, and introducing narratives that change the emotional habitus of an audience and influence the broader public.

Key words: intersectional feminism, policy entrepreneurship, comedy, public policy

Introduction

This article is a policy entrepreneurship theory-building exercise that will examine the way female comics use their comedy to define problems and solutions. This analysis sits within intersectional feminism to appreciate the many ways people can impact change. Juliet Williams defines intersectional feminism as, ‘a form of feminism that stands for the rights and empowerment of all women, taking seriously the fact of differences among women, including different identities based on radicalization, sexuality, economic status, nationality, religion, and language. Intersectional feminism attends to the ways in which claims made in the name of women as a class can function to silence or marginalize some women by universalizing the claims of relatively privileged women’ (Dastagir 2017). Importantly, this includes gender queer, non-binary, and transgender women. As a result, descriptions of female or women comics include these identities.

The impact of individual actors on the policy process has been a long-standing issue in political science. Analyses by Dahl (1961) looked at the role of different types of elites, Walker (1974, 1977) examined the actions of US Senators and Mintrom and Vergari (1996) reviewed the relationship between entrepreneurs and advocacy coalitions. An issue in this analysis is how the features of entrepreneurship impact the policy process and why one type of actor, rather than another, fits these moments.
Kingdon’s (1984, 1995) work on policy entrepreneurs serves as a starting point for this analysis. In his Multiple Streams Theory, he identifies policy entrepreneurs as ‘advocates who are willing to invest their resources – time, energy, reputation, money – to promote a position in return for anticipated future gain’ (Kingdon 1995: 179). He argues that the development of policy alternatives is a central component of policy making. More recent work by Zahariadis (2007) defines entrepreneurs as ‘power brokers who are manipulators of problematic preferences’ (Zahariadis 2007: 74). In each conception, the roles of causal narratives (including comedic narratives) are important in attaching a proposed solution to a problem condition.

Recent policy entrepreneurship literature has focused on the formal and informal positions of actors. The jobs and status of policy entrepreneurs offer different issue jurisdictions and levels of access. Sunstein (2006: 206) notes that ‘the voice of an influential politician comes with amplifiers.’ In addition to Walker (1977), Scott and Carter (2002) have also analysed the role of members of Congress influencing foreign policy. Examples of unelected policy entrepreneurship have also been seen in a number of fields. This includes authors’ books such as The Jungle by Upton Sinclair (1906), Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring (1994), and Ralph Nader’s Unsafe at Any Speed (1965), each of which directly led to policy changes. Moreover, Mackenzie (2004) has demonstrated the role of state-level bureaucrats as entrepreneurs in the Australian context by reviewing the role of the former Queensland Director of Cabinet, Kevin Rudd.

Considering the role of policy entrepreneurs is important for several reasons. First, small groups of actors’ contest problems and solutions that influence all aspects of the policy process, including agenda setting, the development of policy alternatives, venue allocation, implementation, and policy evaluation. Rochefort and Cobb (1994: 14) note that ‘for many types of social problems, one can identify a well-delineated, specialized community of operatives.’

Secondly, this analysis is important because the definition of entrepreneurship is an unsettled and evolving issue in political science literature. Schneider and Teske (1992: 737) note that Riker’s (1986) analysis ‘transforms the notion of entrepreneurs from the study of heroic figures to the study of a larger class of individuals who help propel political and policy changes.’ Lastly, refining ways to identify policy entrepreneurs helps inform the policy process. Locating entrepreneurs within the policy making process is complex and difficult because many actors fail publicly in their policy entrepreneurship, while others are successful and invisible. Policy entrepreneurship relies on the attributes of the individual and the context of the policy window (Kingdon 1995; Mackenzie 2004).

In all, the actions of policy entrepreneurs seek to define new issues and redefine old issues to prejudice the policy making process. This article moves forward with a review of the features of policy entrepreneurship and expands its analysis by incorporating intersectionality.

Intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991) is important because of the way it informs the way political actors articulate problems and solutions and the way power dynamics are considered. It is a theory that responds to the way fluid, heterogeneous identities are made hierarchical and stand-alone elements by the powerful in society to return power to themselves. Intersectionality acknowledges that because we have simultaneous and heterogeneous identities, these identities interact and cross in ways that amplify multiple oppressions and make a disadvantaged, stigmatized environment worse for some and the way hierarchically advantaged identities are privileged (Jones et al. 2014: 5; Strolovitch 2007: 26). It challenges the notion that a person’s multi-faceted identity can be reduced and prioritized by society, law, policy, and the media to a single identity that best suits the way those in power would like to address oppression as a means to remain in power.

Therefore, media affirmatively, if unwittingly, often serves to maintain the oppressive regimes of elite actors when it both accepts the premise that identity is one-dimensional and
then when it seeks to engage with or remedy the ‘problem identity’ (Schneider and Ingram 1993). In this way, there is a strategic hierarchy to the way identities and discourses are used to reinforce power dynamics that isolate, other, and oppress the target identity while seeming to help them. Discourse is critical in establishing what facets of identity are valued, in what order, and how it will be discussed in a way that others the target and returns power to the powerful. This is a process where an identity is rendered tolerable for discussion and the public agenda. This process of societal bleaching turns heterogeneous, multi-faceted persons into one-dimensional objects. People will be taken on certain terms and not others. Complexity and fluidity will be avoided. Emotions, laughter, and the tolerable or contestable targets of laughter are at issue in this article. Emotions and emotionality fold nicely into intersectionality because a core tenet of emotionality in public policy is first that it is hierarchical and second that institutions are used to arrange the distribution of penalty-inducing emotions and policy in a way that returns power to the powerful.

This set up establishes a hierarchy of identity that both privileges certain groups and the way identities are talked about, and laughed about, to give power back to those in power. So for instance, the media don’t talk about mental illness because it makes people feel uncomfortable. And we don’t talk about poverty too much because it makes people who are not poor feel uncomfortable. And we talk about gay people through sex or fashion because that discursive positioning keeps heterosexuals as the accepted norm. And television hosts talk about surgeries for gender reassignment surgeries for transgender people because considering transgender identity as a medical operation rather than a sense of self reaffirms binary identities. So institutional power dynamics pick and choose which identity to talk about and how to talk about it – so that those in power can feel comfortable. All the while, this ignores the real multi-dimensional parts of ourselves (for all people) that operate together. It ignores particularly bad oppressions people face and it lets the media off the hook in the way they present different groups.

Changing the underlying power dynamic is what is needed and this can be done through comedic narratives when people are not reduced, problems are multidimensional, and privilege is acknowledged. Levy (1997: ix) notes that ‘humor as a human activity crosses – and double crosses – many lines and boundaries, including those of gender.’ We argue that female comics can serve as policy entrepreneurs in public administration by introducing disruptive narratives that locate them in the solution-making process, offer solutions that return power to the powerless and change the ‘emotional habitus’ (Gould 2009: 32) of an audience and influence the broader public.

Challenging the Broad Interpretations of Policy Entrepreneurship

The expanding literature on policy entrepreneurship has led to an increasing and evolving list of entrepreneurial characteristics. This includes features noted by Kingdon (1984, 1995), Roberts and King (1991), Mackenzie (2004), Schneider and Teske (1992), Walker (1977) and Mintrom and Norman (2009), which provide valuable information on entrepreneurial attributes; however, critical reviews are also needed. We challenge the broad interpretation of policy entrepreneurship by highlighting five key elements that have been discussed as necessary, and suggest they are better understood as characteristics of likely success. These include:

- Innovation;
- Expertise;
- Coalition building;
- Patience and resilience; and
- A strong defense of the idea after adoption.

Interrogating entrepreneurship has occurred from its start and there is evidence to support the evolving nature of the concept within political science literature. For instance, Mintrom and Vergari (1996: 424) note that policy entrepreneurship ‘will be refined in the years
ahead.’ This can also be seen in Roberts and King’s (1991: 149) proposal of four entrepreneurial activity structures that include ‘creative, intellectual activities’ such as idea generation and dissemination, ‘strategic’ actions including developing a plan of action, and heuristics, ‘mobilization and execution’ such as gaining media attention, and forming coalitions, and lastly, ‘administrative and evaluative’ functions to enact and review the program. In addition, Mintrom and Vergari (1996: 422) suggest three requirements of policy entrepreneurship, stating:

First, they discover unfulfilled needs and suggest innovative means to satisfy them. Thus, they must be alert to opportunities (Kirzner, 1973). Second, entrepreneurs bear the reputational—and, frequently, some of the financial and emotional—brisks involved in pursuing actions that have uncertain consequences. Third, they serve to resolve collective action problems by assembling and coordinating networks of individuals and organizations that have the talents and resources necessary to undertake change.

While these are valuable empirical contributions, it is critical to distinguish between attributes that make actors entrepreneurs and those that make the success of entrepreneurs more likely. This is a difficult task because multiple actors can have an impact within a policy domain, in different ways and at different times. As a result, reviewing cases where these elements are successful or unsuccessful provides useful data.

First, and perhaps most controversially, the promotion of innovative ideas is not a requirement of entrepreneurship. While innovation within social science has been a popular social science topic (Downs and Mohr 1976), there are ample examples of entrepreneurship based on old ideas. For example, Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher is seen as a policy entrepreneur (Barzelay 2001: 66) regarding her role in pushing to shrink the size of the British civil service. However, the idea of civil service reform was not new or novel (Wildavsky 1966). Still, definitions of innovative entrepreneurship remain, including the case for public entrepreneurship by Mack et al. (2008: 235, emphasis added), who identify entrepreneurs as, ‘any elected official, bureaucratic employee, non-profit manager, or private citizen who is perceived by his/her colleagues and friends to be instrumental in fostering innovative change to modify the way that public entities operate.’ Indeed, while entrepreneurs may well have innovative ideas, the issue at hand is whether entrepreneurship requires it. We argue that this is not a necessary feature. Entrepreneurs often attach old solutions to new problems and the reliance of traditional policies over innovation is common.

Secondly, expertise is not a requirement of entrepreneurship. There are countless examples of ill-informed entrepreneurs who successfully attach solutions to problems on the basis of access or power despite their ignorance. Weissert (1991) and Mackenzie (2004) note that expertise is useful because it helps entrepreneurs to mould an issue’s image and its future. An expert entrepreneur may be able to talk about an issue in more positive and convincing ways; however, this should be considered an attribute of success rather than a necessity. For instance, ‘think tanks’ provide a valuable role as entrepreneurs (Roberts and King 1991); however, they may not provide expertise but rather a mobilization strategy. In 2005, the Kansas State Board of Education debated a proposal to ban the teaching of evolution in public schools. Leading the effort and testifying before the Board was the Discovery Institute staff, who advocates neo-Darwinian teachings, referred to as Intelligent Design. They argued that their position was that all of science should be taught, including Darwinian evolution, and any evidence to the contrary (Slevin 2005). This was an example of entrepreneurship where tactics were present in influencing the agenda, and policy outcome, rather than issue expertise.

Thirdly, the focus on the need for coalition building (Mintrom and Vergari 1996: 423) ignores the role of closed policy entrepreneurship that seeks to be invisible to achieve their outcomes. Indeed, having a coalition may hurt an entrepreneur’s efforts behind the scenes because it can draw attention to the issue in ways that generate hurdles rather than promote enactment. For example, former US
Congressman Bob Dornan’s (R-CA) covert inclusion of a legislative ‘rider’ to ban HIV-positive service members from remaining in the military in 1996 was done on the basis of his individual committee membership (Neff and Edgell 2013). Once this became public, Republican leaders approved a reversal that repealed the law. Dornan responded, stating, ‘[t]his disgusting act of cowardice with my purported leaders caving in to a pro-homosexual, draft-dodging pathological liar in the White House is pathetic’ (Martinez, 1998). Thus, it was the lack of a coalition that made the initial effort successful. In addition, closed entrepreneurship also involves keeping issues off the policy agenda. Indeed, following the death of former Senator John Chaffee (R-RI), Carl Pope, executive director of the environmental group the Sierra Club, stated “[n]o one will ever know how many bad things did not happen in the last three years because John Chafee was there” (Clymer 1999).

Fourthly, resilience is seen as a crucial element of entrepreneurship (Kingdon 1995; Weissert 1991). Kingdon (1995) writes that ‘probably the most important, successful entrepreneurs are persistent’ (Kingdon 1995: 181). However, there are times when political windows open and entrepreneurship may occur without long-term struggles or the need for patience. United States President Barack Obama was elected in 2008 with majorities of his political party in both the House of Representatives and the US Senate. If he was considered an entrepreneur on any issue during his first two years (including universal health care, the repeal of ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ or the START treaty), this was not the result of great resilience but rather particularly favourable policy environments. This is consistent with Weissert’s (1991) analysis of state legislators. She notes that those actors without ‘expertise and persistence,’ who act during open policy windows, are not entrepreneurs and are better described as ‘policy opportunists’ (Weissert 1991: 264).

Lastly, one mark of entrepreneurship is the way actors ‘defend their views’ (Snare 1995: 415). This highlights an important role of entrepreneurship in protecting solutions and ideas from attack long after they have been implemented. However, a strong defense may not be enough or even be required to ensure that action takes place. For instance, President Kennedy’s entrepreneurship in 1961 to advance space travel and land a man on the moon in 1969 (Schulman 1975) is noted despite his assassination in 1963. In addition, American Vice President Richard Cheney was a chief proponent of the use of ‘enhanced interrogation techniques’ by intelligence officials to gather information about potential threats (Gellman and Becker 2007). However, despite his staunch defence, one of President Obama’s first acts in 2009 was to issue an executive order banning the use of torture in future interrogations (Paust 2010).

In all, entrepreneurship is an evolving concept. Earlier definitions provide useful measures for considering the roles of actors and indicators of success. Indeed, the role of policy defence provides a useful tool of entrepreneurial identification because often the easiest way to recognize these actors within the policy process is to look for those defending the idea after its passage. However, it remains important to isolate core characteristics moving forward and ensure that the actions of individuals can be demonstrated (Botterill 2013).

Proposing Five Core Attributes of Policy Entrepreneurship

We argue for a definition of entrepreneurship that includes intersectional feminism based on how actors shape change. A review of the literature identifies how female comics are playing entrepreneurial roles already. This builds on the research regarding the role of media entertainment on the socio-political institutions. For instance, Benoit and Anderson (1996) look at the competing narratives between Vice-President Quayle’s critique of single-motherhood and the television character and program Murphy Brown. Dow (2001) looked at the performative nature of Ellen Degeneres coming out as lesbian on the television program Ellen, and Reed (2007) examined the creation of queer identity. Bruni (1999) examined the kiss between Mariel Hemingway and Roseanne Barr.
More broadly, Marsh and Tindall (2010) examined the role of celebrity politics in the policy process outside their work. Loader et al. (2015) look at celebrities and social media while Gamsin and Modigliani (1989), Schulte (2008), Hollinger and Lanza-Kaduce (1988), and Neff (2015) look at the role of movies on policy development.

Central to this analysis is considering entrepreneurship in terms of the way ideas or solutions are brought to life by actors. Building on existing literature, five essential traits for policy entrepreneurship are proposed:

- Serving as a relevant actor (Kingdon 1995);
- Attaching their solution to a problem (Mintrom 2000);
- Biasing political outcomes (Botterill 2013; Howlett and Ramesh 2003);
- Gaining something from their engagement (Kingdon 1995; Schneider and Teske 1992); and
- Changing the emotional habitus of socio-political structures.

The five attributes in this definition assume varying degrees of entrepreneurship and success. Indeed, the failure to have any one of these would result in advocacy rather than entrepreneurship, which requires an analysis that scales the characteristics that have been noted. In all, these categorizations aid in identifying actors and their roles in the policy making process. This includes emotional incentives from societal norms and routines to laugh at the ‘right’ jokes, at the ‘right’ time, and in the ‘right’ way.

**Entrepreneurship Requires Being Seen as a Relevant Actor by Other Decision Makers**

Locating oneself within an issue domain is critical to entrepreneurship because there needs to be a reason why people should listen to the entrepreneur (Kingdon 1995). This includes making a claim of legitimacy on an issue by virtue or credibility, authenticity, or responsibility. Scientists have issued calls to action regarding environmental damage from Climate Change due to their responsibility ‘on our watch’ (Guptara 1999: 197). Another example may include responsibility based on jurisdictional position. Policy entrepreneurs gain power and legitimacy from comedy as a trusted social institution.

Females are contributing narratives about women’s bodies, mental health, assault, abuse, domestic violence, sexuality that simply would not be changing national discourses if women had not used their art and voice to change the emotional structure of society. Importantly, female comics’ lives represent different places in an intersectional hierarchy of identity, with less initial power. They operate and influence the public and policy in unique ways from this position. In short, the messenger is as important as the message and women have a unique ability to disrupt social conventions, ‘destabilize the male gaze’ (Burgin et al. 1993: 60), and illustrate how politics is shaped from personal experience. Ahmed (2015: 172) notes, ‘women’s testimonies about pain – for example, testimonies of their experiences of violence – are crucial not only to the formation of feminist subjects but to feminist collectives.’ The policy entrepreneurship by female comics is therefore unique because this consciousness-raising translates their experiences into public knowledge through satire, critique, and disruptions in the understanding of a norm or a system of power. Moreover, the golden-age of female artists is not limited to comics or the United States, and includes Alison Bechdel, the cartoonist, author, and playwright; Amy Schumer, Wanda Sykes, Mindy Kaling, Leslie Jones, Tina Fey, Marga Gomez, Amy Poehler, Nakkiah Lui, Melissa McCarthy, Shiralee Hood, Kristen Wiig, Margaret Cho, Kathy Griffin, Gretel Killeen, Julia Zemiro, Stella Young, and Magda Szubanski to name just a few.

Female comics have become policy entrepreneurs as comedy has become a public interest institution that maintains popular confidence. In 2016, the Pew Research Center reported that ‘U.S. adults are roughly as likely to learn about the presidential election from an issue-based group’s website, app, or email (23%) or from late night comedy shows (25%) as from a national print newspaper (23%)’
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This is consistent with Hardy et al. (2014) whose study showed that viewing of the satirical Colbert Report informed viewers about political action committees (Hardy et al. 2014). This has been seen most recently in light of the Trump Administration. The Christian Science Monitor has noted, ‘throughout the 2016 presidential election, Oliver and other comedians such as Stephen Colbert, Trevor Noah, Seth Meyers, and Samantha Bee offered respite to millions of Americans from an especially fraught political season’ (Hinckley 2016). Yet, this trend goes beyond American politics. Forbes reported in 2017 that, ‘a powerful wave of women in comedy has gained major traction in India over the last few years’ (Mangaldas 2017).

So not only do certain women in comedy garner more confidence than government institutions, they also have their own bully pulpit, to introduce narratives and bring attention. The New South Wales parliament’s reacted to a news scandal when a 2005 taped interview revealed Donald Trump describing acts of sexual assault on women. Greens MP Jeremy Buckingham tabled a motion condemning Trump’s words and actions. The motion was passed unopposed and noted that the state Parliament, ‘agrees with those who have described Mr Trump as “a revolting slug” unfit for public office.’ The term ‘revolting slug’ is related to comedian Rosie O’Donnell calling Trump an ‘orange slug,’ after a very public series of arguments (Gerathy 2016).

Entrepreneurship can be Seen in the Way Solutions are Attached to Problems

The decision of which problems to attach solutions to is often calculated; however, because events can be both expected and unexpected, this is not always the complete choice of the entrepreneur. Considering the role of problem conditions is important because Kingdon (1995: 182) notes that ‘a problem captures the attention of important people, and participants hook their proposals onto it, arguing that they represent solutions.’ Entrepreneurs can attempt to attach solutions by generating problems that need solving (Lupia and Menning 2009), taking advantage of focusing events (Birkland 1998), utilizing routine policy windows (Walker 1977), or exploiting policy failures (Brändström and Kuipers 2003). As a result, Mackenzie (2004: 372) suggests that an actor’s ‘alertness’ to potential moments of opportunity is a key attribute to the success of entrepreneurs. This skill allows political actors to not only recognize approaching policy windows but to maximize them while open.

One example of attaching solutions to problems involved Amy Schumer’s way of addressing sexual assault. In a parody of the television program ‘Friday Night Lights’, Schumer’s husband portrays a high school football coach who explains that the teams’ game plan for the season will involve ‘No raping,’ to which one of his male players responds, ‘but we play football’ (Schumer 2014). The skit ensues where players suggest situations where rape could be allowed and the coach continually answers no to raping. Amy Schumer is answering the problem of a culture that tolerates sexual assault by attacking that culture. No raping is seen as a radical proposition, which highlights the way women and girls are objectified by society. Indeed, some sitcoms are able to influence political opinion. In particular, when a sitcom showed positive representations of women and displayed positive gender relationships, data shows viewers were more sympathetic toward women and more likely to support reproductive rights (Holbert et al. 2003). The study built on the literature which suggests that ‘political discourse is not only found in nightly news programs, morning newspapers, and political advertising, but in a wide range of entertainment media outlets’ (Holert et al. 2003: 57).
New Zealand comic Alison Brine acted as a policy entrepreneur using comedy to make a serious point about sexual assault (McConnell 2016). While different than Schumer, this article profiles the ways that comedy as policy entrepreneurship is powerful and attracts international media attention.

Entrepreneurship is Reflected in the Management of Political Outcomes

Policy entrepreneurship includes influencing political and emotional outcomes. The impact of that entrepreneurship has the capacity to change the emotional habitus and societal perceptions of issues based on an interaction between the stage, the style, the viral nature of the sketch, the audience, and the topic. This is consistent with Carey et al. (2017) who note, ‘In supporting policy implementation in cross-boundary contexts, language, symbols and objects, emotions, identity and practices make important contributions to the efficacy of these processes.’ The ‘Fey effect’ has been discussed in the literature regarding way Tina Fey’s impersonation of Sarah Palin during the 2008 Presidential Primary on Saturday Night Live was perceived to have had a negative impact on Palin’s favourability ratings and subsequently caused a decline in the Republican presidential ticket (Baumgartner et al. 2012). Baumgartner et al. (2012) found that amongst its college aged sample, Fey’s impersonation helped ‘prime’ Palin as a ‘hick’ in the minds of viewers and affected her ability to influence the sample groups vote. In addition, on Saturday Night Live, Melissa McCarthy’s version of White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer has also created political pressure on the current administration given her aggressive, anti-media portrayal. It was reported that President Trump was particularly displeased with Sean Spicer because he has been so successfully parodied by a woman.

The first of a series of Australian short viral internet sketches called the, Minister for Men critiques the decision of the previous Abbott Government in downgrading the position of ‘Minister for the Status of Women’ to the ‘Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women’ (Sydney Opera House Talks and Ideas 2015). This sketch series is a good example of the way that female comics are able to generate media and arguably influence policy decision. The sketches were released in early February 2015 and later the same year, Tony Abbott’s successor re-instated the position of ‘Minister for Women’.

Entrepreneurship requires having the capacity to access decision makers for their issue, either because they are the decision maker, have the confidence of the decision maker, or have access to allies and networks that influence the decision maker (Zahariadis 2007). The entrepreneur functions as the decision broker throughout the process, even though they may have an outside or closed position. This requires: 1.) an understanding of the needs of players within the system; 2.) the skill to leverage one’s strengths on the process, and 3.) influence within the institutional structures and venues deciding the issue. In short, policy entrepreneurship cannot exist without access to, and an understanding of, political processes because policy entrepreneurs are agents that shepherd change.

Access is often a function of skill. The ability to broker decisions requires an understanding of the policy process, including actors and systems. This includes identifying and negotiating around competing problems and solutions (Kingdon 1995: 18; Mackenzie 20041). Mintrom and Norman (2009: 652) refer to this as ‘social acuity.’ Indeed, entrepreneurs can recognize the concerns of varying viewpoints (Mintrom and Norman 2009) and manage the fears and needs of other players (Bardach 1972) because policy actors cannot broker outcomes if they do not understand what the other sides want, fears, and why. Being able to broker the solution is essential because, as Snare (1995: 416) notes, ‘if compromise breaks down no decision is likely.’

Moreover, understanding the positions and feelings of other actors allows the entrepreneur to be better at selling their solution as the best option. For instance, Houston and Richardson (2000) compare the competition between actors on the issue of air bag safety. They
highlight the role of Dr. Richard Martinez of the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration as a successful entrepreneur. Key to being seen as effective was his expertise and ability to deflect the concerns from congressional members, to advance more regulations (Houston and Richardson 2000).

One additional way that policy entrepreneurs manage their issue through the process is by tailoring their problem and solution to more favourable venues (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). If a problem is aligned within an entrepreneur’s policy jurisdiction, this allows the actor to locate themselves more easily in the solution-making process. For example, US Senator John McCain is a senior member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Recently, he identified a problem with the oversight of unmanned drone aircraft being operated by the Central Intelligence Agency. He stated, ‘[w]hat we really need to do is take this whole program out of the hands of the Central Intelligence Agency and put it into the Department of Defense’ (Bresnehan 2013). This would move the issue to a jurisdiction under his purview.

Entrepreneurs Benefit From Their Engagement

The way actors benefit from their actions is a defining feature of entrepreneurship. Schneider and Teske (1992) highlight the benefits or profits gained as a key motivating factor in entrepreneurial action. Similarly, Jones (1994: 182) notes that entrepreneurs ‘seem to derive particular benefits out of the leadership activities.’ The type of benefit sought is related to a range of motivations and may be related to the issue or their position. Kingdon (1995) states that entrepreneurs are ‘motivated by combinations of several things: their straightforward concern about certain problems, their pursuit of such self-serving benefits as protecting or expanding their bureaucrat’s budget or claiming credit for accomplishment, their promotion of their policy values, and their simple pleasure in participating.’ Indeed, while some entrepreneurs may seek ‘the collective good’ (Jones 1994: 197), others desire simple recognition. If a politician is the leading entrepreneur, then re-election interests are likely a leading outcome goal. However, if a scientific conservationist serves as the entrepreneur, then both the perceived public needs and their own conservation minded approaches’ are more likely. In both; however, the benefit is theirs. Thus, while positions do not determine entrepreneurship, they do inform considerations about potential rewards.

In addition, Mintrom and Vergari (1996) highlight the way this motivation impacts the scope of the policy change sought. They highlight a key distinction between policy advocates and policy entrepreneurs, such as the difference between environmental lobbyists who may be happy with any change to air pollution laws, while policy entrepreneurs would seek more enduring goals, such as eliminating air pollution from coal plants in the state of Massachusetts. In short, entrepreneurs work to create ‘dynamic policy change’ (Mintrom and Vergari 1996: 423). However, not all entrepreneurs are created equal and this reinforces the value in understanding the contextual factors that advance their interests.

Emotional Habitus, Policy Entrepreneurship, and Female Comics

Bourdieu’s (1977) concept of ‘habitus’ is defined as ‘the socially developed capacity to act appropriately’ (Rawolle and Lingard 2008: 731). March and Olsen’s (1995: 30–31) ‘logic of appropriateness’ is broadly consistent, in that the actions of policymaking are ‘driven by rules of appropriate or exemplary behaviour, organized into institutions’ (March and Olsen 2004: 2). Gould (2009: 32) argues that an ‘emotional habitus’ of appropriateness existed for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities around their rights and the issue of HIV/AIDS in the mid-late 1980’s, but that this was ruptured by a Supreme Court ruling (Bowers vs. Hardwick) that upheld discrimination against LGBTQ people. She writes:

‘Hardwick magnified and bolstered an emergent, new constellation of affects and emotions, effectively authorizing sentiments and expressions of...’
gay rage and indignation and directing them toward the government' she adds, ‘the new emotional practices and new sentiments about gay selves and about dominant society created a new, counterhegemonic emotional habitus and challenged the limits of the previous political horizon’ (Gould 2009: 134).

The social organization of laughter is a key set of rules and regulations that can be challenged by changes to an emotional habitus. Change in the emotional habitus around an issue can alter the arrangement of feelings within society, political institutions, and policymaking for that issue. Public policy and policy implementation plays a key role in challenging or reproducing norms that set forth how groups are viewed and which emotional rules apply.

This has long been known by black feminists such as Audre Lorde, who notes, ‘Black women are expected to use our anger only in the service of other peoples’ salvation or learning. But that time is over. My anger has meant pain to me but it has also meant survival, and before I give it up I’m going to be sure that there is something at least as powerful to replace it on the road to clarity’ (Lorde 2012: 132). She adds, ‘Every woman has a well-stocked arsenal of anger potentially useful against those oppressions, personal and institutional, which brought that anger into being’ (Lorde 2012: 132). It is also important to note that emotions and emotional expressions are two different things. Indeed, expressions can be coerced, repressed, and regulated. Or as Maya Angelou wrote, ‘Black Americans, for centuries, were obliged to laugh when they weren’t tickled & to scratch when they didn’t itch’ (Angelou 1977).

In short, we are talking about ‘socially produced forms of knowledge’ from discourse (Carey et al. 2017: 6). Carey et al. (2017: 12) note that ‘rather than merely describing the world, feminist perspectives seek to develop conceptual insights that can enable real world change.’ The expression of humour for women comes at a price (Levy 1997). Neff (2016) argues that when the engagement involves the social and political world, this price constitutes emotional taxation. Neff (2016: 1–2) defines emotional taxation as:

‘Emotional taxation or the taxation of emotions is the emotional cost, intentional or not, that a policy, program, or scheme places on an individual or group for entering into the political process or addressing a political issue. The impact of this emotional tax (the level of taxation) to enter the policy process is relative to an individual or groups political power (i.e degree of stigma), capacity to pay the cost, and collective support. As a result, there would be one kind of emotional cost for someone entering a political process as a positively constructed identity (race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability) and a potentially higher emotional tax to enter the process from a marginalized community.’

Female comic’s influences on the emotional habitus around an issue can be seen in Samantha Bee using comedy to make a serious point about the rape threat. Tina Fey and Amy Poehler also shifted the emotional habitus around Bill Cosby’s sexual assault allegations in their Golden Globes commentary. While hosting the program in 2015 they addressed the issue in their monologue. Amy Schumer’s sketch pointedly addressed the problem of sexual violence against women in the military by choosing a female character in a military video game and finds herself drummed out of the service. These are good examples of comics as policy entrepreneurs, using comedy to make a serious issue accessible and relatable regardless of gender.

In all, the implications of these cases for policy entrepreneurship theory-building argues for considering the way cultural actors disrupt or reinforce the emotional habitus of an issue and enable or influence the public and policies. Trust in government institutions is low and trust in comedienne is high. The contributions that women in particular make with an intersectional feminist approach to policy making is important because it looks at hierarchies of identity and incorporates a narrative that is different than men and worthy of attention.

Conclusion

To analyse narratives in public administration we rely on two analytical frames: first is
the literature on policy entrepreneurship that suggests a contested and evolving frame of participants that may depend on political skills or products. Second is the literature on intersectionality, which is joined with emotional habitus. Here, female comics who disrupt emotional, social, and political patterns of behaviour through comedy that draws attention, or parody to an issue are viewed as policy entrepreneurs in public policy and public administration.

This article builds on the current literature regarding the role of policy entrepreneurs in influencing the policy process and argues that a ‘rethinking’ of policy entrepreneurship is needed. Much re-thinking around Kingdon (1984) has taken place recently and this provides a contribution to this effort. The result is an application of policy entrepreneurship as a tool that tells us more than that an entrepreneur was present. Rather, public policy and public administration analysis seeks to examine the impact these actors had and why. Indeed, this should include private or unwitting entrepreneurs that play central roles in policy development as well as those that perform before our eyes.

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