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An Examination of the Narratives of Lottery-Scholarship Legislation

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Abstract

States have relied on lottery-scholarship policies to support public goals, such as higher education. In this paper, I utilize the narrative paradigm to examine how stories from the Hope for Arkansas lottery campaign became embedded in the policy-design process. Through in-depth interviews with 19 participants and a document analysis of 86 documents, the findings suggest that the Hope for Arkansas campaign’s narratives were tied to the policy-design process of the lottery legislation.

Keywords: Narrative Paradigm, Lottery, Public Policy, and Campaign Messages

On March 29, 2012, the Mega Millions lottery reached an all-time high at $656 million. When the numbers were announced, 3 people across the United States matched all 6 numbers to receive $218.6 million each (Fox News, 2012). Media outlets buzzed about this jackpot. Of particular interest was the commentary by the Fox News Channel anchors. The three news anchors discussed and praised many states that provide revenues generated by the lottery for educational purposes. The discussion, however, never focused on the demographics of the citizens who typically buy lottery tickets: primarily the poor (Bowden & Elrod, 2004; McCrary & Condrey, 2003; Rubenstein & Scafidi, 2002). Instead, the lottery was admired because it provided revenue to help achieve the public goal of funding education.

With the Georgia Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally (HOPE) lottery scholarship paving the way, 10 states have now adopted lottery-scholarship policies. The empirical research points to the regressive nature of lottery policies, specifically noting that lottery scholarships disproportionately benefit middle- and upper-income families at the expense of the poor (e.g., Bowden & Elrod, 2004; Duffourc, 2006; Heller & Marin, 2002; 2004; McCrary & Condrey, 2003; Rubenstein & Scafidi, 2002). Researchers have examined lotteries, especially in the southeastern region of the United States, to investigate the effects of lottery-scholarship aid on access, retention, and brain drain (Cornwell, Mustard, & Sridhar, 2006; Dee & Jackson, 1999; Heller & Marin, 2002; 2004; Henry & Rubenstein, 2002; McCrary & Condrey, 2003; Ness & Tucker, 2008). However, studies have not focused on how citizens are discussed in relation to policy creation.

The purpose of this study is to describe and provide insight about the policy process for an initiated act that moved a lottery issue to the Arkansas state legislature in 2009. Examining stories from the Hope for Arkansas lottery campaign and the policy-design process provides a frame of reference to connect the discussion of ideas within the policy formation to the public’s general understanding of the policy. Because they address policy issues for an audience and debate among themselves when formulating a new policy, legislators are classified under deliberative political discourse (Bitzer, 1981). Therefore, examining the Arkansas lottery policy
allows for a better understanding of how legislators generate stories about citizens in relation to a public problem and policy solution.

In this essay, I argue that the Hope for Arkansas lottery campaign created a narrative that was continuously adopted by policy actors during the lottery’s policy design. The major theoretical approach for this study is the narrative paradigm which assumes that humans are natural storytellers (Fisher, 1984). Therefore, the conceptual knowledge of the stories from the Arkansas lottery’s campaign and policy-design process provides a case study to better understand how narratives about the citizenry were communicated among the policy actors. Yin (2009) noted that, in order to explore a real-life phenomenon within a bounded system, such as a specific policy, a qualitative, case-study research design should be used. The Arkansas lottery-scholarship policy became the case to understand the narratives that were generated within the campaign and policy-design process. The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. How did policy actors narrate the Hope for Arkansas lottery campaign?
2. To what extent did the narratives from the Hope for Arkansas lottery campaign become embedded in the policy design of the Arkansas lottery policy?

**Theoretical Approach: The Narrative Paradigm**

Fisher (1984) introduced the narrative paradigm as “a theory of symbolic actions” (p. 2) that is grounded in the constructivist interpretation of stories that helps one create and understand the lived experience. As Bute and Jensen (2011) noted, the paradigm provides a means for one to understand and connect personal experiences with narratives. Galvin, Braithwaite, and Bylund (2015) stated, “We tell each other stories to make sense of our world, construct and alter identities, cope with stress and loss, and help others become part of our experiences and lives” (p. 75). Barker and Gower (2010) stated, “Stories are memorable, easy to understand, and establish a common ground with others that create credibility” (p. 299). Essentially, the narrative paradigm explains how stories are purposeful and provides a means for receivers to organize and make sense of the world around them. In the current study, the narrative paradigm offers an opportunity to examine how policy actors utilize stories to garner support for controversial policies, such as state lotteries.

While stories provide a means for a receiver to understand an experience, narratives also develop communities of people that share and position stories within a historical and cultural frame (Barker & Gower, 2010; Claire et al., 2014; Fisher, 1984; Spector-Mersel, 2010). Bute and Jensen (2011) illustrated that narratives are grounded in social and political contexts; the narrative’s historical frame depicts a specific context of “time, space, and social positioning” (p. 216). Grounded in constructionism, the cultural frame was described by Spector-Mersel (2010) as follows:

Through the stories common to the groups we belong to we create our familial, organizational, community and national identities. Our culture’s “grand stories” teach us what “worthy” life is, what we should aspire to and what we should avoid, what is good and what is evil, what is forbidden and what is permitted. (p. 208)

As Harding (2012) noted, “narratives are constructed from the (textual and non-textual, verbal and non-verbal) elements and events that surround us” (p. 230). Thus, narratives are linked to one’s identity and existence (Spector-Mersel, 2010).
Additionally, Burns (2015) discussed how a story is judged with two determining standards of reasonable quality: narrative probability and narrative fidelity. First, narrative probability refers to the cohesion that provides a realistic, meaningful, factual, and consistent narrative (Burns, 2015; Fisher, 1984). Galvin et al. (2015) explained this concept: “You experience narrative coherence when parts of the story work together, the story ‘fits’ with other related stories, and the characters are described in ways that seem consistent with what else you know about them” (p. 75). Narrative fidelity signifies the narrative’s truthfulness, reliability, and degree of relevance (Fisher, 1987). Narrative fidelity is created when a narrative appears to be authentic and plausible, and there is a connection to one’s personal experiences and beliefs.

Storytelling has already been recognized as a tool utilized for political communication. It has been used to examine party platforms (Smith, 1989), political social movements (Douglass, 1993; Gustafson & Neff, 2007), and campaign rhetoric (Hammond, 2013; Rivett, 2009) to name a select few. To extend the narrative paradigm’s application in political communication, this study assumes that the narrative paradigm can help explain how the stories that are narrated by policy experts provide a means for the general public to judge the story’s coherency, rationality, and consistency (the story’s narrative probability). Additionally, the narrative paradigm allows the exploration of narrative fidelity related to the relevancy and plausibility of the lottery-policy narratives. Utilizing stories that incorporate high levels of narrative probability and fidelity may help political actors narrate public policy in a way that garners support for issues that are controversial, such as state lottery policies. In particular, this study directly examines the power of creating political messages about narrative probability and fidelity that relate a policy problem (the value of higher education) to a policy solution (creating a state lottery). Accordingly, this study provides a new perspective about controversial state-lottery policies in the United States.

Arkansas Profile and Characteristics

Lotteries had been prohibited in Arkansas since 1874; however, the lottery topic was an issue that the Arkansas legislature continuously revisited as part of its agenda (Wickline, 2007). Before the eventual passage of the lottery in 2008, proposals were flawed by procedural aspects of the constitutional-amendment process, through a joint proposal that would have called on the legislature to reverse a civil-rights provision (Nelson & Mason, 2007), or with religious opposition that helped to diminish the lottery proposal’s momentum. Previous lottery-proposal attempts failed to gain enough support from the voting public in 1996 and 2000; both options included much broader forms of gambling with the addition of casinos.

The failure of these first lottery attempts relates to citizens’ conservative values that deem gambling as a societal and moral ill. Therefore, when lottery proposals were, once again, introduced via the legislature, lawmakers, reflecting their constituents’ previous conservative will, shot down the lottery proposals (Wickline, 2007). Arkansas has an initiative process that allows citizens to circumvent the state legislature by giving them the right to gather signatures in order to propose a ballot measure for an election. A proposed constitutional amendment goes on a ballot if petitioners can gather valid signatures from at least 10% of the turnout for the most recent gubernatorial election (Nelson & Mason, 2007). With lottery legislation losing traction in the state legislature, Lieutenant Governor Bill Halter (D) began a formal lottery campaign in January 2008 after successfully gathering enough signatures to propose a ballot initiative. Lieutenant Governor Halter (D) was a catalyst for driving the attitude change about the constitutional amendment which was passed by voters in 2008; he focused on the educational
benefits with the lottery’s revenue. The lottery campaign became known as Hope for Arkansas and proudly claimed that voting for the Arkansas lottery would provide the same opportunity for Arkansans as the HOPE lottery scholarship had for Georgia’s residents.

On November 4, 2008, the majority of Arkansas voters supported the constitutional amendment that allowed the Arkansas legislature to create a lottery that would fund higher-education scholarships for state institutions. The 87th Arkansas General Assembly completed the task of creating the Arkansas Lottery Scholarship Act in March 2009. Originally created in 1991, the Academic Challenge scholarship was revamped and expanded to create wider access to residents. Unlike other states that divide lottery revenue among higher education and K-12 programs, Arkansas is unique because all funds generated by the lottery are designated for Arkansans enrolled at Arkansas’ public and private, nonprofit, two-year and four-year colleges and universities, and the scholarships are offered regardless of people’s income. The Academic Challenge lottery scholarship is awarded to 30,000 students each year and has led to record enrollment (Wickline, 2013). However, scholarship retention has been an issue; 40% of the Arkansas students fail to make the grades to receive lottery-scholarship funding for the next school year (“Why Did,” 2011).

Methods

Participants and Data Collection

After receiving Institutional Review Board approval, I utilized a purposeful sampling technique to recruit participants, which helped identify a sample that provided in-depth details about the specific case (Patton, 2002). I recruited 19 participants who were tied to the Arkansas lottery-policy process, including former state senators and state representative members as well as members of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, the University of Arkansas System, regional institutions, governor’s staff, the retail community, an Arkansas college association, and the Hope for Arkansas lottery campaign. Participants consisted of 9 male and 10 female participants. Additionally, 17 participants were White or Caucasian, and 2 were African American.

Interviews took place over a six-month period in 2013, and I received informed consent from all participants before conducting the interview. The participants agreed to audio record the interview. During each discussion, I gathered participants’ storied recollections of their lottery-campaign and/or policy-design experience by using qualitative, semi-structured interviews. This format allowed participants to share their personal narratives. Overall, the interviews provided a means to uncover the complex storytelling about the passage of the Arkansas lottery policy. As suggested by Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater (2007), I fully transcribed each interview. To maintain confidentiality for all participants, I assigned pseudonyms during the transcription process.

Because the study’s participants relied on reconstructions for the policy-design process of the Arkansas lottery legislation, I included a document analysis, or a review of the relevant documents, to complement and to provide a deeper context about the qualitative interviews’ data. For this study, 14 primary documents were analyzed, including legislative-committee meeting minutes, a memorandum, government-policy reports, the actual legislative bills, the legislative act, and initial lottery-scholarship program information. I also reviewed 72 secondary documents, such as local and national newspaper articles, advertisements, and opinion columns.
Data Analysis

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested reviewing the interview transcripts simultaneously with the document analysis by using the constant-comparative method, which allows the findings to be grounded and rich in the phenomenon’s context, rather than the researcher’s own perspective. To utilize the constant-comparative method in this study, I categorized the narratives’ data themes, either using the language or general data from the interviews and documents, allowing a comparison to evolve into an emerging property for each theme (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that the qualitative study’s reader must find the research trustworthy. Therefore, I employed a triangulation strategy. I simultaneously analyzed interview data with a variety of archival documents to triangulate and to verify the interview data’s accuracy. Additionally, I utilized member checking to test the study’s interpretations and conclusions by allowing the participants to appraise the overall sufficiency of the data analysis. After completing the coding process, participants were contacted to review the preliminary findings. Fourteen participants approved the findings, and five participants did not respond to any member-check requests. By utilizing a triangulation strategy and member checking, I established that the study’s findings are trustworthy.

Findings

By analyzing the interview and document data with the constant-comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), a descriptive and conceptual understanding led to three major narrative themes of the Hope for Arkansas lottery campaign: a primary narrative about higher education, and secondary narratives that focused on neighboring lottery states and the poor.

Primary Narrative: Higher-Education Beneficiaries

All participants noted that the lottery campaign’s central narrative was higher education and that the narratives influenced the policy-design process. The participants described how the campaign narratives specifically emphasized the importance of Arkansans obtaining a degree. Blomeley (2008) noted that Halter (D) stated, "[W]hat this is really about in my mind is hope. What this is really about in my mind is education. I wouldn't be pushing this proposal if the proceeds wouldn't go toward college scholarships” (p. 13). The lieutenant governor campaigned on the idea that education was a public good, focusing primarily on the low number of residents who had degrees. Therefore, the campaign narrative focused on the need for higher education and how the lottery would not only increase the residents’ level of education, but also create an opportunity for economic growth within the state. Page (2008) noted:

The state is one of the lowest in per capita income as well as educational achievement and Halter said that educational achievement and per capita income were linked -- one affecting the other. "No state that has high educational achievement has low per capita income," said Halter. "We must improve the percentage of college grads to improve per capita income." Arkansas holds the No. 49 spot and West Virginia follows at No. 50 in per capita income. (p. A3)

Donald, a higher-education interest-group participant, noted, “The messaging that college is important is part of the message of the lottery scholarship. For that, I thought it elevated the
discussion of the importance of higher education and the importance of getting a degree.”

Larry, a legislative participant, noted that the Hope for Arkansas campaign was “able to influence the discussion by driving the media narratives.” The perception about the lottery was formatted in the storytelling in order to promote the need for educational access. For instance, Kevin, a lottery-campaign interest-group participant, noted that the story given to the media focused on low-income, minority students who would become “student endorsements.” Kevin discussed the narrative’s creation:

I got us a black female student studying aviation mechanics. Then, I had Hispanics [students]. I brought in a couple of these profiled spokespersons for the lottery. Gave them their script, and basically [said] say this in your own words and go on camera saying why you and your peers support the lottery. We put those types of students [on camera]. We didn’t take your high-profile debutant, urban league, I mean, junior-league girls. They didn’t tell the story. It was your middle-class, lower-class students who were perceived to be incapable of financing their own way.

Therefore, the campaign’s story promised citizens wide eligibility for the scholarships. As scholarships for all citizens became the narrative’s focus, support was gained from the voting public on all different levels, regardless of socioeconomic income or ethnicity. As a result, earmarking the lottery funds for education helped to gain support from a conservative state’s residents who once had an unfavorable view of the lottery. Once the lottery amendment passed with a majority vote, the legislature had to complete the people’s will. Therefore, the focus on higher-education scholarships within the Hope for Arkansas lottery campaign had important implications for the formal policy-design process during the 87th Arkansas legislature in 2009. The Hope for Arkansas campaign narratives continued as the legislature crafted the lottery policy.

The study’s participants noted that students were the primary beneficiaries of the lottery’s net proceeds because of the focused narratives that were communicated by the Hope for Arkansas campaign. Bob, a legislative participant, stated, “Some of this was already dictated by the campaign itself since the constitutional amendment voted on by the public stated that higher-education students would receive scholarships as a result of the lottery’s creation.”

The legislature adopted the higher-education narrative by expanding the eligibility for an already established state scholarship program, the Academic Challenge. Maggie, a higher-education interest-group participant, said, “I mean legislators wanted to help everyone.” To expand this scholarship program, the legislature lowered the GPA and ACT requirements (2.5 GPA or a score of a 19 on the ACT) and removed the income limits. Jennifer, a higher-education interest-group participant, stated:

Of course, the other component was getting rid of the income cap because there were so many families that didn’t meet that income cap that was on the original Academic Challenge scholarship. It expanded the scholarship. When you take the income cap away, when you set the academic requirements at where they set them, you cast a pretty large net.

The policy was broad enough to ensure the inclusion of low-income residents as well as first-generation college students. Jason, an interest-group participant from higher education, noted that broadening scholarship access to low-income, minority, and first-generation college students was important to the Hope for Arkansas lottery campaign’s narrative because “low income and minority populations are usually the most dominant users of this type of gambling that had been experienced in other states.”
Secondary Narratives from the Campaign

While the lottery campaign’s main narrative focused on higher-education scholarships, two more contributing narratives were found within the lottery campaign: neighboring lottery programs and the poor.

**Neighboring states’ narratives.** Prior to implementing the Arkansas lottery, five of the six neighboring states had created lotteries. Arkansans were driving across the border to purchase tickets and were funding various educational initiatives for those states. Creating a lottery to stop the funds from moving outside the state and to finance higher-education scholarships in Arkansas was a clear secondary narrative. As a guest columnist for an Arkansas paper, Halter (2008) commented:

> Count the Arkansas tags on vehicles parked outside the Stateline Citgo in Texarkana, Texas; or Mr. T's Liquor Store in Cardwell, Mo.; or Freddy's One Stop in Roland, Okla. These retailers, just across the Arkansas border, are the top lottery retailers in their respective states. Tens of thousands of Arkansans spend millions on state lotteries every year. Audiences at civic clubs and community forums from Texarkana to Fort Smith to Springdale have witnessed the outbound flow of traffic and revenue. They appreciate the need to keep Arkansas money in Arkansas, working for public education here at home. (para. 4)

When Kevin, a lottery-campaign interest-group participant, was promoting the lottery idea around the state, he let Arkansans tell the narrative about the amount of money that was leaving the state to support neighboring lotteries. He gave this viewpoint:

> The local message, particularly the speaking message, was how far is it to the nearest lottery-sales store. You could ask that at any town in Arkansas, and they could tell you to the mile in Arkansas how far it was because they knew, and that meant they were doing it. So the message was you guys are already buying lottery tickets to the advantage of another state. We just thought it was obvious you should do it for your own advantage. That was a very persuasive message. In fact, people were actively engaged in lotteries in other states. So the message was you are already spending this money, and Arkansas isn’t getting anything for it. Those were two very powerful messages.

**Low-income narrative.** The other secondary narrative was related to oppositional narratives that were produced by several religious groups and the Arkansas Family Council. Kyle, a legislative participant, noted that the opposition’s narrative was that, primarily, the poor fund the lottery. He stated:

> That mainly came from folks that were against it in principle. They would spend most of the time telling you that everybody that was going to be buying tickets were people that didn’t need to be buying them because they couldn’t afford them anyway. There is some truth to that.

This argument, that primarily the poor fund the lottery, was the major message sent by the opposition during the lottery campaign. For instance, the following message came from pastor Larry Page as he spoke to a Baptist church in North Little Rock: "A government is supposed to be a guardian of its weakest people, but the lottery makes it an economic predator, and those are mutually exclusive roles" (Hahn, 2008, p. 16). Typically, each organization would state that it was for education and the potential to increase scholarships, but not with a state lottery. Hahn (2008) noted, “Page said he supports efforts to fund more college scholarships for Arkansans, as the lottery aims to do, but ‘the cost is too high’” (p. 16).
Within the policy, the state lottery was framed as entertainment and did not specify a type of person who was required to play (Arkansas State Legislature, 2009); however, this study’s participants identified discussions within the lottery-policy design process that focused on low-income families. Bob, a legislative participant, stated, “There was discussion and concern about who might play and being concerned about how you market to players so you aren’t targeting those who, in other states, tend to play more than others that have less to play with.” The legislative participants noted that they were freed of blame from their conservative and religious constituents because the lottery amendment had developed through a ballot initiative and had not been referred to the ballot from the legislature. Mary, a legislative participant, stated, “I think we all said it doesn’t matter whether we voted for it or not; the people passed it, and now, it is our job to make sure it is the best legislation that we can possible write.”

Kevin, a lottery-campaign participant, discussed the narrative as follows:

The group that took a leadership position in opposing the lottery was Arkansas Family Value. They are for a variety of conservative, Christian issues. He said that the lottery is going to create a very dangerous incentive to people who are not capable of understanding their finances. It’s a very veiled, racist message there. You are talking about low-income people spending money on cigarettes and booze and gambling when they should be buying food for their kids. So in Arkansas, that’s a Black message. That’s lower-income people.

Discussion and Implications

A deeper understanding about the Arkansas lottery policy’s political process is gained from this study’s findings, which complement and extend the discussion within the context of a narrative paradigm (Fisher, 1984). The findings underscore the importance of taking a closer look at the narrative paradigm in order to describe and explain the implications of the campaign narratives on the policy-design process. Specifically, this study’s findings suggest that the narratives designed by the Hope for Arkansas lottery campaign heavily influenced the policy-design process in the state legislature.

The study’s exploratory nature provides policy actors with a more conceptual understanding about the role of narratives in the policy-design process. First, the narrative paradigm gives the general public a way to judge an expert’s story on the grounds of narrative probability and narrative fidelity. More specifically, the experts, or the policy actors, place a story, in this case higher-education scholarships and a state lottery, in a narrative rationality that allows the public to join the lottery’s cause. By creating a narrative that focused on the deficiency of higher education in Arkansas, citizens were given a frame of reference to understand the state’s important policy issues. This focus on higher education directly relates to the narrative’s power to organize information, lend credibility, and connect to the receiver’s personal experiences (Barker & Gower, 2010; Bute & Jensen, 2011; Fisher, 1984). Policy actors behind the Hope for Arkansas lottery campaign effectively created a narrative to garner support for a controversial topic that had not been favored in the past. The narrative constructed reality in a way that portrayed higher education as a public good that all Arkansans could find attainable, which directly links to creating stories that bind community groups together by relaying life’s aspirations (Spector-Mersel, 2010). The Hope for Arkansas campaign’s narrative provided a persuasive story that had both narrative probability and fidelity. Narrative probability was created by the coherency narrative about the need for higher-education scholarships in relation to
the funding mechanism, the state lottery. Because the campaign continued to paint a picture for the deficiency of degreed citizens as it related to the state’s economy, a rationale for the lottery policy was justifiable to the people. As citizens heard and completed the stories about neighboring states that were being supported by Arkansans, the narrative fidelity was established. Therefore, the narrative was approved by a majority of voters, and the state legislature had to design a public policy that was directly linked to the reality produced within the narrative.

Specifically, this study explained how the campaign’s narratives shaped the policy-design process. The Hope for Arkansas lottery campaign constructed a policy problem by highlighting the state’s deficiency with higher education as it related to a policy solution which focused on the adoption of a state lottery to generate higher-education scholarships. The lottery campaign’s narrative was crafted to promote higher education as a public good. Therefore, the higher-education narrative was encouraging for voters who once deemed lotteries as unfavorable. By focusing on higher-education students, the stories promoted within the lottery campaign focused on cultural characterizations of popular images related to the need for higher education.

Moreover, the majority of the voters and the legislature ignored the oppositional messages, drafted by religious organizations and the Arkansas Family Council, that pointed to the lottery’s ramifications on the poor, consequences which were supported by research that demonstrates a disproportional financial burden on individuals who live in low-income households (e.g., Bowden & Elrod, 2004; Duffourc, 2006; Heller & Marin, 2002; 2004; McCrary & Condrey, 2003; Rubenstein & Scafidi, 2002). Because little attention was paid to the problems with low-income residents disproportionately spending money on lottery tickets, the lottery campaign and legislature valued higher education over the policy’s consequences on the poor. While study participants noted that they were freed of blame because the voters passed the lottery amendment through the initiative campaign, the final policy did little to protect the poor from the lottery policy’s adoption. Because public policy helps the citizenry view society, when policies are framed in a way that dismisses a group of citizens, such as the poor, the institutional structure that marginalizes that group of people is reinforced. In this case, the poor’s voices, feelings, and actions are assumed to not have any weight in the lottery-policy discussion.

Perhaps the target population of low-income citizens is not deemed a problem because the label itself presents mixed messages, from a group that is simply down on its luck to messages that suggest that the group is lazy and feeding off people who work hard for their money. Regardless, the low-income group is unable to really defend its status within the lottery policy due to lower political participation and resources at their disposal, perpetuating the notion that this problem is, once again, not of significant importance to policy makers.

A contribution of this study to the narrative paradigm is the examining the impact of narratives in the policy design process. For instance, the narratives found in the Hope for Arkansas campaign heavily influenced the policy-design process and became absorbed within the Arkansas legislature. Subsequently, the legislature adopted the lottery campaign’s social construction of student beneficiaries due to the constraints of the lottery amendment that was approved by a majority of the voters.

**Limitations and Conclusion**

There were several limitations related to this study. Because the study relied on reconstructions of the past, information recall about policy-actor names, lottery lobbyists, and
specific pressures was a limitation for some participants. To counter these issues, I employed a triangulation strategy, analyzing primary and secondary documents, as well as utilizing member checking to verify the participants’ data. Additionally, this study omitted student voices. To circumvent these limitations, a future study should observe a state that is in the process of designing a lottery to consider the political discussion as the policy unfolds, rather than relying on reflections about the past.

The study’s result suggests that the policy-design process for lottery scholarships is complex. States continue to gain support for lottery policies that focus positive social constructions, such as the benefits of higher education, that are embedded within the culture. While the National Communication Association (2011) and Silver (2011) brought attention to the role that researchers have in connecting communication research to public policy, more research in the field of communication studies should focus on discussions during the policymaking process. Besides examining the effects of lottery implementation, Ness and Mistretta (2009) extended the scholarly research about lottery-scholarship policy by describing the lottery-adoptions process. In agreement with Ness and Mistretta (2009), researchers should pay more attention to the policymaking process, in particular the communication exchange among policy actors, to gain a better conceptual understanding of public policy. Specifically, researchers should continue to examine political discourse and rhetoric used to describe the citizenry during the policy process.

As Bitzer (1981) reinforced, legislators address policy issues for an audience and debate among themselves when formulating new policy, providing a point of reference from policy formation to the public’s general understanding of the policy. By applying the narrative paradigm, insight was obtained about how policy actors created a narrative with labels that became embedded in the political discourse during the Arkansas lottery’s policy-design process. It is my hope that this study serves as a catalyst for researchers to continue examining the role of communication in the policy-design process.

References


