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Section B

Systems Thinking in Top-Down Policymaking

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The Standard (Top Down) Policymaking Frame

- Smart, beneficent, and skilled policymakers save the world
- There are big problems in the world and they need big solutions
 - ▶ FDA, CDC, NIH, Medicare
- Complexity science to illuminate the choices for big policymakers

Conventional Role of Technocrats in Standard Policy Frame

- Make a great model of the problem that identifies the best thing to do
- Communicate the model to the policymaker
- Policymaker picks the best course of action (and thanks the technocrat)

The Role of Systems Thinking in Top-Down Applications

- Offer policymaker illumination
 - ▶ Unanticipated threats
 - ▶ Things to monitor
 - ▶ Political levers

- Challenge of communication
 - ▶ Complex models hard to explain
 - ▶ Develop trust
 - ▶ Co-developing the model using participatory strategies

Broader Scope of Policy Models

- Illumination extends to the political landscape
- Shift the ecostructure of power and control
 - ▶ Wolman understood that the mayor didn't hold all the cards
 - ▶ Wolman illuminated the landlords and engaged them in the decision

Public Health Triumvirate

- Technocrats + Politicians + Civic Leaders
 - ▶ All three at the table
 - ▶ All three sharing illumination about the nature of their problem
- Common strategic error in public health: missing one of the triumvirate
 - ▶ Technocrats informing just the policymaker
 - ▶ Policymakers playing to just the civic leaders
 - ▶ Technocrats working directly with civic leaders
- Towards an inclusive top-down ecostructure
 - ▶ Top-down policies that are not inclusive run into obstacles
 - ▶ Wolman made sure he was talking to the civic leaders

Parenting Analogy

- Neglectful parents
 - ▶ I don't love you, do what you want
- Authoritarian parents
 - ▶ I love you, do as I say
- Permissive parents
 - ▶ I love you, do what you want
- Authoritative parents
 - ▶ I love you, let's illuminate the problem

Federalists and Anti-Federalists

- Alexander Hamilton
 - ▶ Most Americans are self-centered rabble
 - ▶ Need enlightened gentleman to run things and get them right
 - ▶ National control

- Thomas Jefferson
 - ▶ Inherent dignity and responsibility of everyone
 - ▶ Town hall decision-making as the basic approach to policy
 - ▶ Local control

The Road Ahead

- Engage the public health triumvirate in participatory model building
- Illuminate their shared problem
- Motivate continued attention to key levers and benchmarks

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