

## Discussion Questions for 17.317, U.S. Social Policy

### **Part I: American Exceptionalism and a Case: Why No National Health Insurance in the United States?**

- This section of the course uses a case study of national health insurance in the U.S. as a way to introduce the policymaking process in the United States and some of the major explanations for policy outcomes

### **U.S. Health Policy**

- What are some of the main explanations for the lack of universal health insurance in the US? For the failure of the Clinton health care reform effort of 1993-1994?
- What are “cultural” explanations? What are “interest” explanations? What are “institutional” explanations? What kind of evidence would proponents of one or the other put forth?
- How would you describe the American political culture? What kind of evidence do we have about what the American political culture is? What are the implications for policymaking? What are the shortcomings of cultural arguments as an explanation for policy outcomes – how well do cultural arguments explain cross-national variation? Temporal variation?
- Similarly, how would you describe the institutional set up of American government, and what are its implications for policymaking? What are the advantages and disadvantages of institutional arguments?
- What are “interest” explanations? What interests are we talking about, and why are they influential? What advantages does this kind of argument have over cultural arguments? Where does this argument fall down?
- When have the major pushes for national health insurance taken place in the U.S.? How would each of the theories outlined above explain why NHI failed to achieve passage each time?
- What is the state of public opinion around health care? How has it changed, or not, over time? If you were a policymaker, what message would you take from the survey results listed in the Blendon and Benson article?
- If many Americans say they want universal health insurance (UHI) – as has often been the case in surveys – what does the fact that UHI has repeatedly failed in the US say about the place of public opinion in policymaking? Or about the characteristics of public opinion – are those surveys meaningful?

### **Part II: Preferences, Participation, and Representation**

- This section of the course focuses on the mass public – what does the public want, who participates in politics, and whose preferences get expressed in public policy. We begin by looking at political participation, which is a key way in which citizens voice their preferences.

### **Who Participates?**

- How can an ordinary citizen participate in politics in the US? What are the modes of participation? Are these similar to or different from other countries?
- What are the ways in which we can differentiate among these activities?

- some hard, others easy (require more or less inputs)
- some convey more info to policymakers than others
- some more unequal than others
- If you were an interest group official who wanted to influence policy, which acts would you urge your membership to take part in?
- Which political acts are the most and least unequal? Why?
- Protests: are they a “weapon of the weak”? Why do affluent engage in disproportionate share of protests?
- What are the factors in participation? What explains why some people participate more than others?
- How much do the factors vary across individuals?
- Where do these factors come from?
- What is the relevance of education for participation? What are the differences between absolute and relative levels of education?
- What is the relevance of income for participation? Of free time?
- What is the relevance of skills, and where can they be gained?
- What are the sources of political interest, information, and efficacy?
- What entities mobilize people to politics? How does mobilization vary over time?
- Compare churches and unions as mobilizing entities
- How can we explain the low participation rates of the young? The high participation rates of the old? Differences by gender and race?
- What kinds of reforms aimed at increasing participation does this model suggest?
- Would full participation matter for policy outcomes? How and why?
- What are the ramifications of political inequality for social policy outcomes?

### **Who Gets Represented? The Case of Social Security**

- Senior citizens have low levels of formal education and income – how can they be so participatory?
- Old people didn’t used to be so participatory – used to be age group least likely to participate – so what changed?
- How has Social Security affected the participation rates of senior citizens over time? What are the mechanisms? What have been the program’s effects on resources, political engagement, mobilization opportunities?
- How have these program effects varied across senior subgroups?
- Seniors participate in politics at higher rates than younger people – does it matter? How would we know?
- At the same time, there has not been backlash against senior citizens – why not?

### **Who Gets Represented? The Case of Tax Cuts and Other Policies**

- Introductory questions: Did people want the Bush tax cuts? If not, why did we get them? How do preferences enter pol system, and whose preferences are expressed?
- Gilens paper:
  - Most examinations of relationship between public preferences and public policy find close relationship, esp. on salient issues. But whose preferences get represented most?

- He collects public opinion polls between 1992 and 1998 and sees whether the proposed change is enacted
- Much of the time there is no change – where does this status quo bias come from?
- He finds that the affluent are much more likely to have their preferences fulfilled than the poor. Why would that be? Does it matter? On what issues is this the case, and what are the ramifications?
- Long-time argument in political science that politicians have an incentive to move to the middle, to the median voter, to the person at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile. What is the median voter model, and why would politicians have an incentive not to stray too far from the median voter's preferences?
- And why does the median voter model seem to fail here?
- What the Hacker/Pierson explanations for the ability of politicians to stray from the median voter without penalty?
  - What are the design features of the Bush tax cuts which these authors say helped secure middle class support? What are the future political and economic consequences of these features?
- On what kinds of policies do you think the public is the most manipulable?

### **Interest Groups I**

- What are interest groups? What different kinds of interest groups are there? What is their role in the policymaking process?
- What is a subgovernment? What is an issue network? How have political scientists' views of policymaking and the nature of influence changed over time?
- What factors in the political system changed over time to open up the older policy subsystems?
- What is the collective action problem in Olson's view? What kinds of groups are subject to free rider problems? What are collective goods? How can groups overcome the free rider problem?
- How does Skocpol characterize changes in the nature of citizen interest groups over time? What are the characteristics of old-style membership associations – what groups are we talking about, how were they organized, what kinds of activities did they engage in, how did they overcome free rider problems, in what ways were their memberships diverse (and not diverse)?
- What about membership associations now? How do they differ from the old-style groups? What changed in American society and politics that caused these new types of organizations to emerge? What is the nature of their organization, relationships with members? What are the implications for political mobilization and policymaking of the ways in which membership associations have changed? In what ways are the new groups diverse (and not diverse)?
- What are the implications for political participation and representation?

### **Interest Groups II: Business and Labor**

- The discussion last time focused on interest groups in general. This session is on two types of interest groups that have some of the biggest impacts on social policy: business and labor.

- Labor unions: What is their function? What has been the trend in labor unions over time? How do they try to influence policy outcomes?
- What are the implications for politics of the decline of unions? What other entities mobilize working class people?
- Why are unionization rates higher in other countries? What would cultural or institutional arguments look like? How does the legal status of unions differ? What is the role of American federalism in shaping the possibilities for the union movement?
- What are the pros and cons for unions of working mainly through the Democratic party? What are the implications of “capture” by one party? How contrast unions’ situation with that of senior citizens, a group in play for both parties?
- What about the political preferences of individual union members?
- What are some of the advantages and disadvantages business has as an interest group?
- What are the major business organizations? How do the preferences of large and small business differ?
- What was the role of business interests in the Clinton health care reform effort of 1993/94
- Interest group wrap-up: how do interest groups operate in the American policymaking system? What are their sources of influence and power? What are challenges that interest groups can face as actors trying to influence policy outcomes?

### **Public Opinion and Preference Formation: The Case of Universal vs. Targeted Programs**

- Describe the two major views of the nature of public opinion – that the public doesn’t know much about politics at all, and alternatively that the public knows enough to be meaningful democratic actors. What kinds of evidence to those who hold each view present?
- How does knowledge about specific policy areas compare to general political knowledge? Do those who know a lot about the political system generally know about policy areas as well?
- How does knowledge/ignorance vary across issue areas? Why? Why might people know about the deficit and unemployment but not about the environment or foreign aid? What are the roles played by the media, personal experience, elite cues?
- What are the factors that lead someone to have high levels of general political knowledge? Policy-specific knowledge?
- What experiments does Gilens perform? Does having correct political information about a policy area lead to different opinions? What about among those with a lot of general political information to begin with?
- What view of public opinion do Page and Shapiro express? Why might aggregate public opinion appear more rational and coherent than individuals’ opinions? Given how little people know about politics, how can this be the case?
- Now we turn to public opinion about social policy, about universal vs. targeted programs specifically
- Regarding the Gilens book chapter:
  - Why are economic rights more controversial in the U.S. than civil rights?
  - Why did Gilens analyze photographs in poverty-related stories in newsmagazines rather than the stories themselves?

- What is the relationship between media coverage of poverty and the racial portrayal of poverty and the actual racial composition of the poor? How does this vary over time? When does poverty coverage get racialized?
- What is the effect of media coverage on attitudes toward welfare?
- Regarding the Cook and Barrett book chapter:
  - What programs are most and least supported by the public?
  - What is the role of notions of “deservingness”?
  - What is the role of different target populations or different kinds of programs (giving cash vs. in-kind goods) on public opinion toward programs?
  - What about opinion among Congressmen – how does it differ from that of the public, and why?

### **Part III: The Policymaking-Process**

- This portion of the course examines how issues come on the political agenda and how several of the main policymaking institutions – Congress and the Courts in particular – function.

#### **Problem Definition and Agenda Setting: The Case of Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage**

- There are a lot of conditions out there – how does a condition become perceived a problem? Why do some problems come to public attention? What role can indicators, focusing events, program oversight play? And why would a chronic, ongoing condition rise onto the public agenda? Why do problems fade from the public agenda?
- How does politics shape agendas? How do changes in political conditions affect what issues arise on the agenda? What role can be played by elections, the public mood, interest groups?
- Who devises policy alternatives?
- The policy stream: when do alternatives arise? What does Kingdon mean by the “policy primeval soup,” “softening up periods,” and “pet solutions”? How is the political history of Social Security privatization since the 1980s an example of these concepts?
- What happens when a window of opportunity opens up? What happens when only two of the three streams (problems, policies, politics) come together? Who or what opens windows? What roles can political entrepreneurs play?
- Consider the case of prescription drug coverage for senior citizens
  - What was the condition?
  - How did this condition become a problem
  - What policy alternatives were out there?
  - How did Republicans, who held Congress and the Presidency, craft a solution? What were their ultimate goals?
  - What was the roles various interest groups played? Which groups were most influential?
  - Why did the drug program that was eventually passed have so many shortcomings? What were the political risks associated with drug program as passed? The potential political benefits?

#### **Problem Definition and Agenda Setting II**

- Here we discuss another view of agenda setting, the Baumgartner and Jones book
- What is a policy image? Can you think of examples? Who can influence the content of policy images, or change images?
- How does a condition become a problem in B+J's perspective? What are the roles played by problem definition and causal stories?
- What is a policy venue? Why might policy advocates want to change a policy venue? Who would want to change a policy venue?
- What is meant by the "scope of conflict," and who would want to expand it?
- Under what conditions is nonincremental policy change possible?
- What is a Schattschneider mobilization? A Downsian mobilization?
- What role do the media play?

### **Policy-Relevant Institutions: Congress**

- Let's say there is a need to reform Social Security. The trust fund in crisis. Need immediate action – you're a congressman who's read Doug Arnold's book – what do you do? What will get constituents most riled up?
  - Increase retirement age
  - Decrease benefits
  - Change number of years of working life on which benefits are calculated
  - Increase wage ceiling for taxation
- Let's say there's a bill that would reduce the deficit and help the environment by imposing a BTU tax on energy consumption.
  - Should I vote for it?
  - What are the issues here?
  - How could a coalition leader make the bill more palatable?
- Concepts from Arnold to know:
  - attentive vs. inattentive public
  - early order vs. late order effects; costs and benefits
  - probability constituents will notice depends on magnitude, timing, proximity to others similar affected; instigator
  - Strategy: wait to cast vote on a bill, esp if freshman. Vote no, because when it passes, both people who wanted it will be happy (got what they wanted) and those who didn't wait it will be happy b/c at least you tried. Any problem with this strategy? (challenger bring it up)
- If lawmakers such good calculators, then why was the 1988 Medicare Catastrophic bill passed?
  - Increase in Medicare: cap out of pocket expenses (late order benefit)
  - Financed by new premiums on seniors, surcharge on high income seniors (early order cost)
  - What does the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 say about what they learned?
    - Don't do financing on backs of seniors
    - Benefits right away
- Implication of much of Arnold: lawmakers should be "delegates" rather than "trustees". But what are strategies Arnold mentions that allow lawmakers to achieve the public good rather than particularized goods?

- What kinds of reforms are implied by Arnold? Eliminate roll call votes? Sunshine laws of early 1970s – pernicious consequences. We still see many difficult issues being resolved with secret negotiation like 1983 Social Security Amendments
- Issue of quality of information voters receive
  - How much of Arnold rests on voters receiving quality info (not distorted by negative campaigning, intentional fuzzing of differences btwn parties, etc)?
  - Or is Arnold’s whole point that info can be manipulated – reduce traceability, alter perceptions of costs, etc?
- Arnold and inequality:
  - Who gets info? Who is in info networks that disseminate info on magnitude, proximity? Who gets mobilized?

### **Policy-Relevant Institutions: Congress II; the Case of the Hidden Welfare State**

- What techniques to politicians use to escape blame?
- What do we mean by the “hidden welfare state” What programs are we talking about? Why are the hidden?
- In what ways are the hidden and visible welfare states similar and different? How large is the hidden welfare state in comparison?
- What are the incentives for politicians to use the tax code to implement social policy rather than regular spending programs? How is the a case of blame avoidance?
- When did “hidden welfare state” programs develop – at the same or different times than the regular welfare state? How have they grown over time?
- What are the distributional consequences – who benefits from these programs?
- What are the political consequences? Do hidden welfare state programs have the same resource/engagement/mobilization effects as visible welfare state programs? Why or why not? What might be the consequences for people’s feelings about government of hiding the benefits people receive?
- Why has the EITC proven such a successful anti-poverty program both economically and politically? But why are most hidden welfare state benefits directed toward the affluent?

### **Policy-Relevant Institutions: The Courts; The Case of Welfare Rights**

- What is statutory interpretation?
- How is statutory interpretation relevant for social policy, that is, why are we talking about the courts in the context of this course?
- Why did the courts begin to play this new role, of interpreting laws in a way that created new “personal rights”? What was Congress doing at this time created a situation in which the role of the courts changed?
- How do courts go about doing statutory interpretation? What kinds of evidence do they look at to discern Congress’s intent?
- In what ways was the Civil Rights movement and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 an important turning point? What were the Warren and Burger courts’ stances on statutory interpretation?
- Why does power shift to lower courts during the 1970s? How does this change interest groups’ strategies?

- What are the policy implications for entitlements of statutory interpretation? What view of poverty is implicit? Does the court ever say there was a “right to welfare”? If not, what did the courts do that expanded welfare?
- What are the implications of these trends in statutory interpretation for interbranch relations? For the concept of representation?
- In the 1980s we get backlash – why, and with what consequences?
- And the question of the courts’ legitimacy. Dahl says “policy views dominant on the Court will never be out of line for very long with the policy views dominant among the law-making majorities of the United States” – do you agree? Are there examples that support or undermine this assertion?

#### **Part IV: Policy in Practice**

- This part of the course examines a number of policies in practice. We will both employ what we’ve learned so far to examine new policy areas as well as learn about new concepts like implementation and the political implications of program design.

#### **Implementation: The Case of Rehabilitation in Prison**

- Today we examine implementation, using a case study of implementing social policy in prison settings. This may seem like an unusual case to examine, but it gives insight into an important aspect of social policy that we’d otherwise miss, and also shows how bureaucratic cultures can have significant impacts on the implementation of policy
- To begin: What is the goal of incarceration?
  - Keep criminals off the street to deter crime
  - Rehabilitate them (although this not a stated goal of Dept of Justice)
  - This is what interests the author: how are these people going to be reintegrated into society? Any preparation has to come from the prison experience
- Why is there skepticism among many observers about whether rehabilitation works
- Definition: Implementation is the “carrying out or execution of a program that has been adopted by legislation or by executive or judicial order.” Let’s say you are charged with studying the implementation of a policy. How would you go about doing that?
  - could look at policy outcomes
  - could look at policy activities
- Most implementation studies look at policy outcomes and are disappointed. Why?
- Instead she examines policy activities. What are the potential conflicts between the short goal of the prison – keeping peace among inmates – and the long-term goal of rehabilitation?
- Why does rehabilitation programming work in some prisons but not in others?
  - Attitudes of correctional officers
  - Social organization of officers and program staff
  - Resources
  - Incentives for prisoners
  - Culture and values
  - Different values can serve same function, can be functional equivalents
    - Appleton: experimentation, professionalism
    - Beaverton: policy, excellence
- Communication as a value



- These programs are threatening to other prisoners, maybe even to other staff (say if they don't have college degrees)
- But if high value is placed on communication, then can see how programs can help prison's goal of security; can help ease relations among staff; can help ease relations with prisoners who are the adversary
- Are there incentives in place, and do these match the existing institutional values
- Bottom line: implementation failures might seem to be a result of incompetence or deliberate resistance, but instead are due to mismatch between programs and their institutional context
- And, need to evaluate processes, not just outcomes if want to understand the course of implementation.
  - Staff and target groups are policy *makers* in their own right
  - The policies have to fit their needs and contexts; a policy design that worked in one context may not work in another
- This will become relevant for the next two sessions, where we discuss the ramifications of policy designs themselves – whether a policy is successful depends on the expectations, orientations, culture of those who implement it and those who receive it.

### **Policy Design**

- This session: different ways of thinking about policy design
  - Schneider and Ingram: how policies shape how we think about target populations
  - Skocpol: whether we should have targeted or universal programs
  - Peterson: whether policies should be implemented at the state/local or federal level
- What is meant by the “social construction of target populations”?
- Describe the four types, and offer examples:
  - Strong/positive (deserving)
  - Strong/negative (contenders)
  - Weak/positive (dependents)
  - Weak/negative (deviants)
- What's the direction of causality here?
  - Do the program designs cause the target group images?
  - Or do the pre-existing nature of the target groups determine how popular the policies are?
- How does the level of benefits vary across the four types?
- How do policy tools vary across the four groups?
- What messages are sent to the groups, and with what consequences for both public opinion (support of their programs) and their own political participation?
- Turning to the Skocpol article: what are the pros and cons of universal programs? Of targeted ones?
- Why did various targeted policies over time fail (poorhouses; mothers' pensions; war on poverty)
- In what ways did various universal policies succeed (Civil War benefits; health education services for mothers and babies; Social Security)
- How are the poor helped within universal policies?

- Are there other policy areas in which we might try targeting within universalism? What are the political prospects?
- Finally, turning to Peterson we take another consideration in policy design: should the federal or state or local governments be responsible for a given policy?
- What division of labor does he advocate?
- Why? What are the dynamics of residential mobility and the implications for policy?

### **The Consequences of Policy Design: The Cases of Welfare and the GI Bill**

- So welfare recipients participate in politics at low rates. Why? Don't they have a large stake?
  - low resources
  - but even controlling for that, participate less than we would predict
  - Soss: the experience of welfare reciprocity undermines their participation
- What is it about getting welfare that undermines participation?
  - demeaning caseworker relationships
  - no rules – caseworkers appears to have great discretion over your benefits
  - ask demeaning questions about your personal situation
  - think whole government is arbitrary; whole govt is like “the welfare”
  - so undermines participation by
    - undermining external political efficacy (how responsive you think govt is to people like you)
    - emphasizing the demeaning, stigmatizing aspect of welfare – you are not a full citizen with legitimate claims on the government
    - you have to demean yourself to ask the govt for a favor
- How does SSDI differ in its effects on recipients vs. welfare?
- Think about other programs we've studied this semester – what effects do their designs likely have on client participation?
- In what ways are the welfare/SSDI differences a phenomenon of implementation?
- How does the experience of Head Start clients differ?
- Can you think of ways to implement welfare so that it did not undermine client political efficacy and participation?
- What are barriers to collective action among welfare recipients?
- AFDC has a positive effect on recipients' internal political efficacy. Why, and are there some kinds of political activity internal efficacy might feed?
- Turning to the GI Bill, in what ways was its education benefits “targeting within universalism” as Skocpol advocated?
- What did affluent recipients get out of the GI Bill? Lower income recipients?
- What would have happened if benefits had not been the same for all – if lower income recipients had received fewer benefits?
- In what ways was the GI Bill similar to Social Security
- Now, the Montgomery GI Bill is available for those in the armed services, but the design is quite different from the original GI Bill:
  - Have to sign up right away; can't sign up later
  - Reduce your pay to get it by \$100/mo.
  - Have to serve 3 years (or two years in Army short enlistment)

- Don't get your money back if you don't use it
- Many categories not eligible
- Would today's Montgomery GI Bill have the same participatory effects?
- both these articles: show political attitudes, participatory orientations by no means set in childhood
  - preadult socialization very important
  - Mettler: parental level of activity huge predictor of activity
  - But on top of that, experiences you have with government as an adult influence your orientations toward govt and your likelihood of participation
- One final consideration: research design and program effects
  - One pitfall of analysis is selection effects: you're trying to determine whether the GI Bill had an effect on veterans' civic memberships and pol participation subsequently
  - but while the GI bill was universal, it was also voluntary
  - so there could be a selection effect – those who had the motivation to pursue the educational benefits may be predisposed to participate at higher levels. So it's not the program causing the participation, but rather some other factor causing both takeup of the program and the pol participation.
  - Soss tries to address this by studying populations that are very similar (say AFDC and Head Start) so that the differences he finds can plausibly be attributed to program experiences rather than preexisting characteristics
  - ideal design: you randomly assign people to programs. But as with much social science, random assignment is impossible. Try to do it with welfare or Medicaid waivers, school vouchers where randomly assign people to the experimental treatment. But they may not choose to do it, therefore compromising the random assignment. So something to keep in mind when reading these kinds of studies.

### **Public-Private Relations**

- We've talked about fact US is unusual in that so much of our welfare state is run through the tax system. Also (and another aspect of that) is that so much of the welfare state in the US is not public but private.
- So what do we mean by the private welfare state? Who provides it?
- What kinds of risks are protected? For whom?
- How and why did we get this hybrid private-public system?
  - What was the role of the weak party and labor traditions in the US?
  - The role of the federal structure?
  - Why did companies begin offering such benefits?
  - What was the role of government in encouraging private provision?
- What are the ramifications of protecting workers through employers rather than all citizens through the government?
  - What are the effects on coverage, inequality
  - What are the political effects?
    - On citizen political participation
    - On the likelihood of future public provision
- What are some advantages of market/private provision?
- There are still many risks still largely outside either the public or private realm

- Child care
- Elder care
- What are prospects for these being addressed more widely?

### **The Working Years: Unemployment, Disability Insurance, and the EITC**

- Again our theme is the nature of social policy, or how various risks are met, for working aged people
- last time: the private welfare state – what risks employers cover, and what the pros and cons are of having employer provided social protections
- this time: public provision for working aged people – what public programs are in place for the kinds of risks that working aged people face (excl health insur)
  - risk of losing your job: unemployment
  - risk of not being able to perform your job: disability
  - risk of being paid too little: EITC
- Why is social insurance, government programs, a good idea in these realms (unemployment and disability in particular)
  - Why don't people just self-insure?
  - What about private insurance, either purchased by individuals or provided by companies? Could there be private unemployment or disability insurance? Who would buy such insurance, and what does this mean from the perspective of the insurer? Also, what happens when people are insured?
  - Thus adverse selection and moral hazard are two phenomena that make these threats difficult to insure for individually
  - What about writing insurance for disability?
  - Why might you want the government to insure for disability and unemployment, and why might this be economically desirable?
- Based on Peterson's arguments, should unemployment insurance be federally or state run?
  - Why don't we have national unemployment insurance?
  - Result: huge variation in coverage, benefits across states
- Disability insurance: why is the workman's comp system set up the way it is?
- Why is complete disability the criterion for Social Security disability insurance?
- Finally, the risk of low wages. How does EITC work? What are its advantages and disadvantages economically and politically compared to welfare
- What would be the pros and cons of raising the minimum wage as a way to address the risk of low wages?

### **Gender in U.S. Social Policy: The Case of Family and Medical Leave**

- This course has discussed the differential treatment of various groups with social policy – differential treatment by income level, working status, age, race
- Today we focus on gender: do we treat women the same or differently? How is gender the same or different from race? What do we do in terms of social policy about the fact that only women can have babies? How have notions changed about the arenas in which women should be treated differently or the same?
- Why has women's labor force participation increased over time?
- How did progressive era reforms try to reduce the burdens on the industrial era?

- What happened during the Depression and World War II with women's labor force participation
  - How did New Deal programs treat women and why?
  - Why different kinds of "social citizenship" for men and women, and how were these different versions realized in policy?
  - How did the government facilitate women's employment during WWII, and how did it also emphasize that such employment would be temporary?
  - During the 1950s, many women working despite stereotypes of that era. In what ways does policy enable and undermine women's status? What was the role of women in the union movement?
  - What policies during the 1960s and 1970s improved women's status, and what was the impetus behind these changes?
- What about private employers and women? What kinds of benefits and protections have women secured in the private realm?
- With the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act, why was the push for gender neutral legislation? What are the advantages and limitations of the legislation?
- What are some of the barriers to adopting the kinds of family-oriented policies that are common in European countries?
- Bringing these questions closer to home: what can universities do to increase the number of tenured women faculty? Is it best to treat women the same as men or differently? What are the pros and cons of each approach?

### **Education Policy: Vouchers**

- Some preliminaries:
  - Why do countries fund public education?
  - In what ways is education policy similar to or different from other policies we've studied this semester in terms of target population, universality, level of government, inequalities
- A major concern with education is that student achievement is not as high as we'd like it. What are the factors that go into student achievement? Which of these is amenable to public policy solutions?
- According to Chubb and Moe, what is wrong with public schools' organization? (too bureaucratic; top-down control; reliance on rules and regulations; unions)
- What is their vision? Market rather than democratic/bureaucratic control
  - Private schools are subject to indirect control through markets – what are the mechanisms?
- What kinds of reforms have been tried traditionally in public schools, and why have they failed in these authors' eyes?
- What kinds of innovative reforms have been tried, and why have these fallen short?
- How do vouchers work, and how would they fulfill the authors' vision?
- The market – vouchers – is supposed to take the politics out of education. Is that likely? Possible?
- Do private schools produce superior results in student achievement? Do Howell and Peterson find that test scores are higher for voucher students in private school? If they

only find differential results for one group of students – African Americans – in one city, what does that say about the effects of vouchers and private schools?

- How do they explain differential results across cities? What other factors would you like to see measured in their study?

### **Education Policy: Federal College Loans**

- Before there was federal financial aid for college – before 1965 – who went to college, and how did they pay for it? What were the consequences for inequality?
- When federal aid began, to whom was it directed? (usually specific groups as with GI Bill)
- When was the first generally available federal aid, and what was the rationale? (defense/ Cold War)
- Why was there such large growth in federal college aid from the late 1960s through early 1970s?
- Why does the emphasis change from the poor to the middle class during the 1970s?
- Why was there a shift from grants to loans, and what were the consequences?
- Then during 1990s, shift to tax favored education savings plans and tuition tax credits. Why did that become the mode of federal education aid, and what are the consequences in terms of access across income groups, etc.?
- What are the consequences of many colleges and universities giving merit rather than need-based aid?
- Are state schools the solution when privates become too expensive? What happens with state school tuitions over time?
- What are the consequences of indebtedness of college grads? Does it affect people's education plans or career choices? How could we design a study to measure that?

### **Conclusion: The Future of American Social Policy**

- Between 1789 and 1934, the size and scope of government was far smaller than it is now. Many fewer policy responsibilities, much lower revenues
- This begins to change in late 19<sup>th</sup> century – Civil War and mothers' pensions, for example.
- Then a second era, from 1935 to 1975, the high watermark of government involvement in people's lives. Not just distributive policy but redistributive policy aimed at helping the poor, and regulatory policy as well.
  - govt programs touch far more lives than ever before
  - more systematic and routinized – less particularistic and local
  - many more categories of people eligible for govt programs
  - The golden era of big government (some think that's a good thing, some think it's a bad thing).
  - Easy to see role of government in one's life
  - Easily half of Americans could see tangible effect
  - Mettler says "American governance proved highly redistributive, shifting resources toward middle-class and working-class citizens" and that gap between rich and poor smallest of any point in 20<sup>th</sup> century
    - What are all the causes of this shrinking gap?
      - Direct govt transfers

- Like means tested and SS, which both redistribute
  - Indirect Govt effects on incomes
    - Labor organizing increases incomes
    - Human capital programs, like Education benes (GI Bill, grants, loans) allows poor and mc to earn more, shrinking gap
- Third era: 1975 – on
  - People treated in different ways depending on their age, employment status, and income
  - continuation of some benefits, esp for elderly
  - shrinking of many govt programs, esp for nonelderly working aged people and the poor
  - growth of hidden welfare benefiting mostly high income
  - Consequences of these changes?
  - on what basis does one get govt benefits?
    - Being old
    - Being more affluent
    - Being a taxpayer
    - Less and less:
      - Being a veteran
      - Being a working aged person, esp working class
      - Being poor (except Medicaid if a poor child and EITC, if a taxpaying poor person)
    - Not at all:
      - Being a mother (no more mothers' pensions)
      - (although do have child and child care benes through tax system; survivors' benes through SS)
  - So less and less about non-market identities and more on the basis of your market identity (as affluent or taxpayer).
  - What does this mean for attitudes toward government?
    - people less likely to think govt does stuff for them
    - hostility to govt
    - less trust in govt
  - What does this mean for political participation?
    - resource effect: diminishing govt programs means diminishing resource for participation
    - engagement effect: less likely to think govt relevant to your life
    - mobilization effect: less identity as recipient of govt program, so less likely to be basis for mobilization
    - AND distributional effect: many govt programs had disproportionate effects on low-income people. As those wither , likely that political inequality will be worse in the future.
    - AND generational effect:
      - WWII generation: high mark of govt largesse b/c of war then the experience of the 1940s through 1970s.
      - Subsequent generations: govt does much less

- What does it mean for individual people?
  - o face more risk as individuals (Hacker article)
  - o financial insecurity
  - o because less pooling of risk through govt programs
  - o the pooling of risk that happens through private employers increasingly reserved for higher income people
- Could have political consequences: economy supposedly in good shape, but people don't feel it
  - o Ask students: is the economy in good shape right now or bad shape?
  - o State of the stock market? Great – last two quarters huge gains. Dow at all time high
  - o Do you think avg American feels that? No: ironically, consumer confidence very low
- So social policy is enormous consequential, affecting not only individuals' well-being, but also through its effects on attitudes toward government and political participation, the very health of American democracy