KAY 493 Comparative Public Policy

Week 3

- Ideas and Public Policy

- Dodds, Chapter 9

Perspectives

- Ideas-based approaches
  - Policy design
  - Policy learning
  - Policy-oriented research
- Versus interest- and institution-based perspectives
- Academic versus political approaches to policy analysis

How to synthesize idea based (academic) & interest/institution-based (political) approaches?

- Ideas can be functional to the pursuit of interests and can give content to interests

- Institutions can facilitate particular ideas

- Certain groups can be effective in the promotion of specific ideas

Why and when ideas change?

- Due to either internal or external pressures

- Ideas-based approaches explain policy stability better than they explain policy change.

- What has changed in public policies due to COVID?

Distinction between ideology and ideas

- Ideas such as freedom, justice and equality are invoked in most political ideologies

- But their importance and conceptualization differs radically between different ideologies, such as communism, fascism, liberalism and social democracy

Normative ideas affecting policy

- Normative ideas
  - Active ageing: The elderly should be engaged in activity, rather than slowing down during their 'twilight years'
  - Domestic and national (Yerli ve milli)

Example: Tazelenme Üniversitesi
(Refreshing University, Education programs for the elderly)
https://tazelenme.com/hakkinda

Theoretical ideas

Ideas that imply specific causal relationships between different factors

Example: 'Welfarist' (Welfare state) approaches suggest that increasing economic opportunities and basic living standards is most important.

Ideas as identity markers

- Some ideas may be propounded by a variety of different actors, other ideas may act as 'markers' of the personal identity of distinctive groups.

- Example: US older peoples' activist group the Grey Panthers, which immediately links their movement to the Black Panthers racial liberation group, at the same time as providing an image of strength and resolution.

Images and Ideas

- Images can come to symbolize certain ideas, and express them more neatly than would be the case in text.

- Example: Kardelenler (Snowdrops) Project

  - In the cold climate of Eastern Anatolia, winter flowers that bloom before the snow is removed are called 'Snowdrops'.

  - Snowdrops, which reach the light by piercing the black soil, like girls who run to school and knowledge by dominating the local conditions and customs, have become the symbol of their own efforts for existence.

How individuals shape ideas?

- How individual policy-makers come up with ideas, and make decisions?

- Impact of individuals versus collective processes or trends.
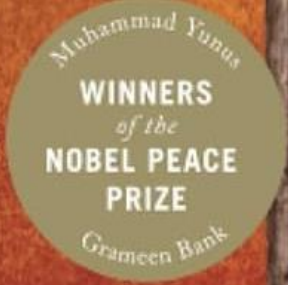
Policy Design

- Policy-makers choose, from a toolbox of different instruments, those help them pursue their **valued outcomes**

- Example: Muhammad Yunus and the microcredit idea

Policy-oriented research

Policy-makers can actively exercise choice about which policies to adopt, in attempts to promote '**evidence-based policy-making**'

Example: What is the evidence behind the one child policy of China and its termination?
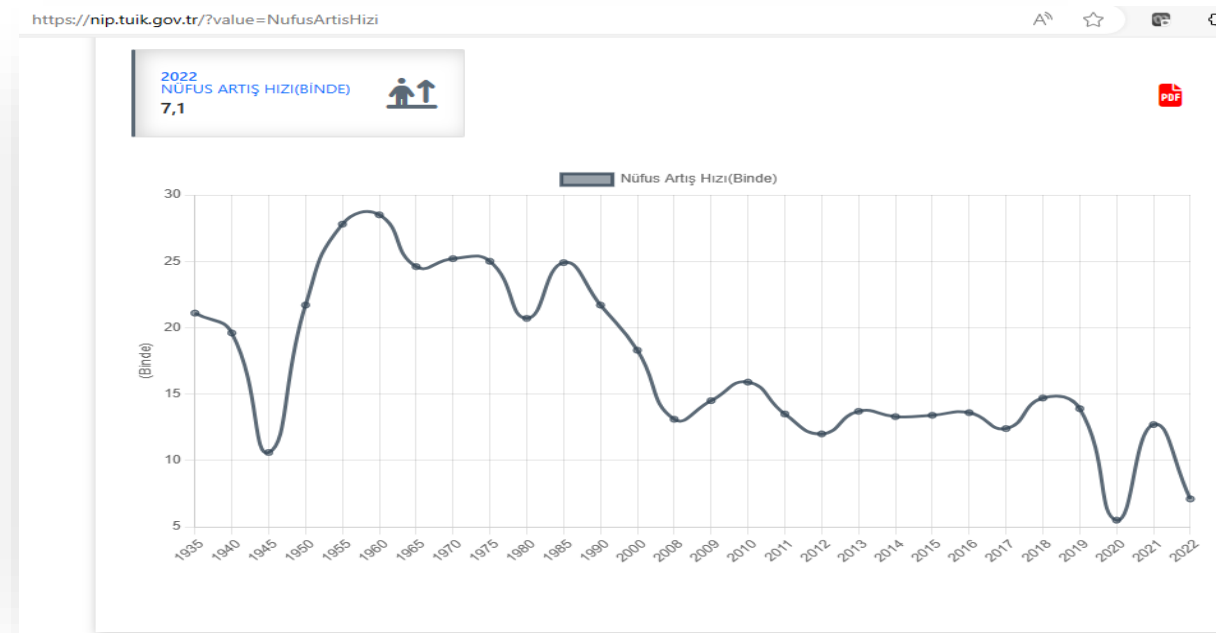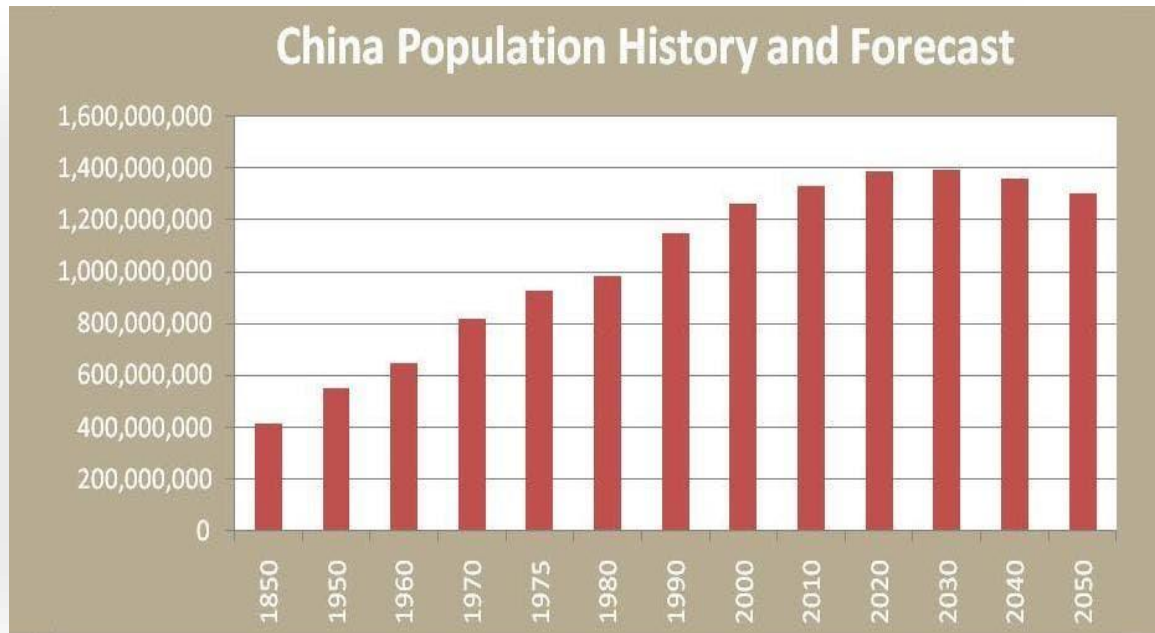
Policy learning

- Governments and other policy actors learning lessons from other governmental actors, international organizations, think tanks and other actors

- Policy-makers can be persuaded for policy adoption by information about successful or unsuccessful policies

theguardian.com/society/2023/jun/04/universal-basic-income-of-1600-pounds-a-month-to-be-trialled-in-england

income

Universal basic income of £1,600 a month to be trialled in two places in England

Scheme to run for two years and participants will be monitored to see what effect it has on mental and physical health

Dahaba Ali Hussen

Sun 4 Jun 2023 15.57 CEST

'A universal basic income will put a solid foundation beneath everybody so they can have a life with security and stop worrying about everything,' said Andy Burnham, the mayor of Greater

Policy framing

Example: What kind of label (positive or negative, politically strong or weak, etc.?) does the refugees have?

- Policy-makers can't collect together all potential policy options and rationally choose one.

- Instead, they use 'frames of meaning' to interpret, categorize and simplify the context by providing labels for particular processes and groups and thus 'making up' the policy. ideologies, to their cultural,

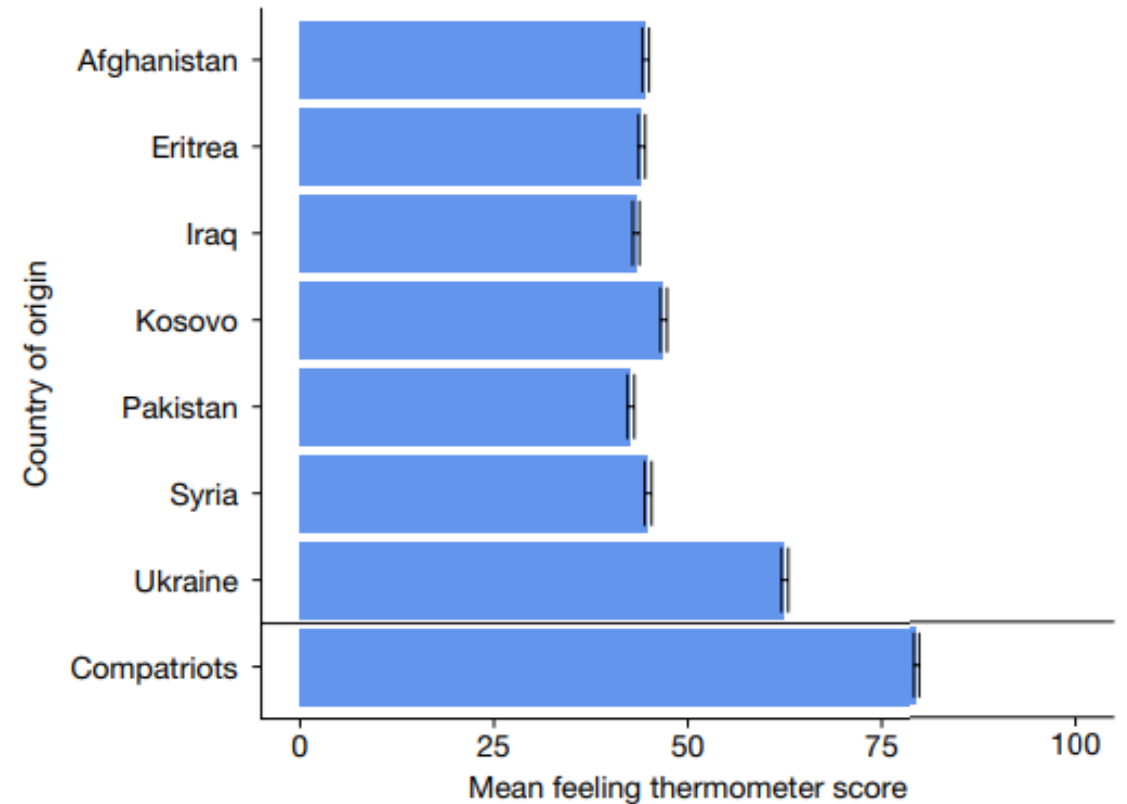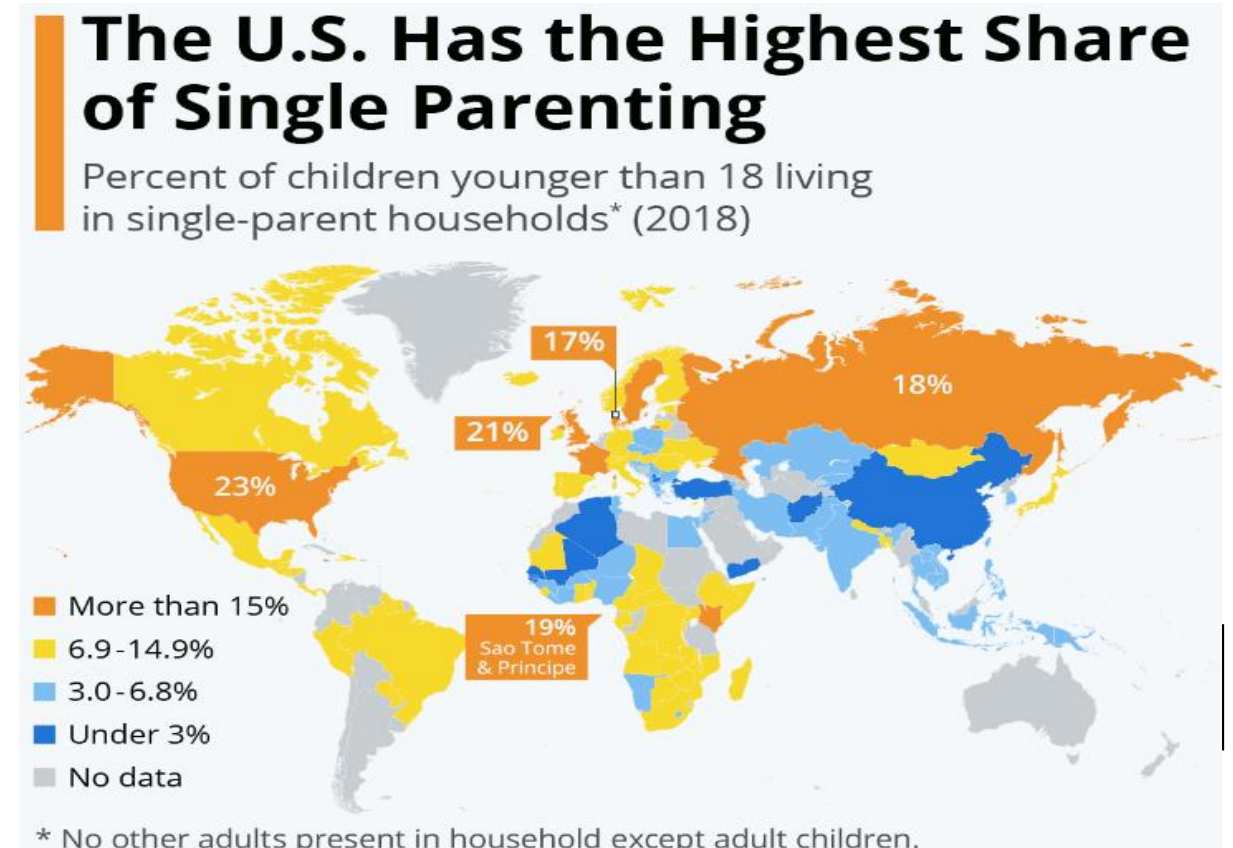- Historical and social context, interests shape framing.

Fig. 1 | Relative warmth towards asylum seekers and compatriots in 2022.

Policy framing example: Single mothers

- Single motherhood is stigmatized in both the UK and USA

- In other European countries single parents are often considerably better off materially and have not been singled out as a specific social 'problem'.

The U.S. Has the Highest Share of Single Parenting

Percent of children younger than 18 living in single-parent households* (2018)

17%

21%

23%

18%

19%
Sao Tome & Principe

- More than 15%
- 6.9 - 14.9%
- 3.0 - 6.8%
- Under 3%
- No data

* No other adults present in household except adult children.

Contesting frames: Why are people poor?

- Policy-makers may 'frame' policy problems by adopting differing assessments of the causes of policy problems.

- Poverty is due to:
  - distributional issues (availability of employment and of basic resources) OR
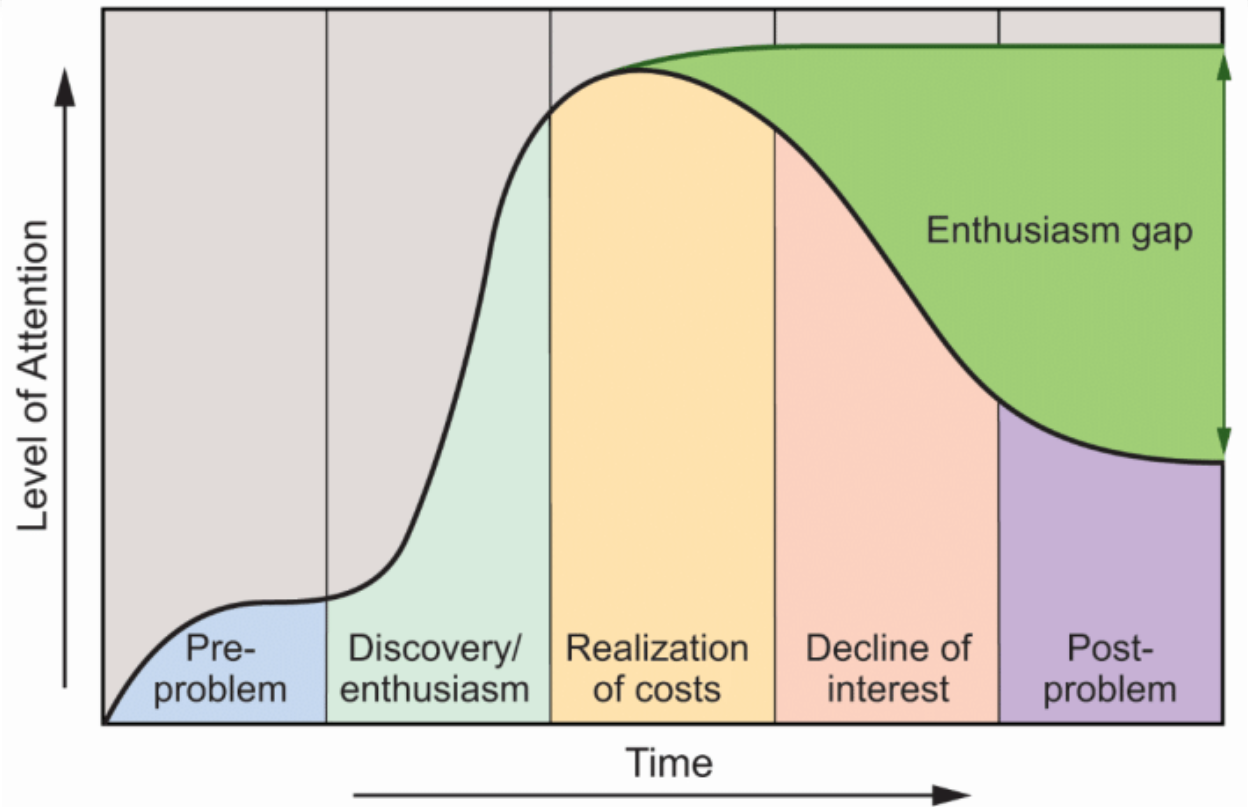 - relational issues (the 'culture' of poverty and/or low social capital)

Issue attention

- How issues 'ebb and flow' on governmental agendas,

- How contextual factors, such as availability of information, institutions and preferences affect the policy agenda

Downs' Issue-Attention Cycle

Post-Modernism

- The postmodernist approach stresses the contingency of rationality, interests and causal relationships as various elements of different competing discourses, rather than as possessing any more substantial status.

Discussion

- Is ideas or interests the detemining factor?
  - Are ideas functional only to the extent that they support particular interests?
  - Is the concept of interest meaningless without ideas giving interest its content?

Conclusion

Rather than focusing uniquely on ideas, many comparative public policy analyses have combined ideas with the study of interests.

Ideas are functional to the pursuit of interests, or that ideas give content to **interests**; **institutions** (with institutions promoting particular ideas); and **groups** (with, again, some groups promoting particular ideas).

Example: A 4-day work week?

Example: Which interests, institutions and groups support or oppose a 4-day workweek?