



Dr. Narketta M. Sparkman-Key and members of the Office of Faculty Diversity and Retention,

In accordance with my acceptance into the Culturally Competent Content Development Program (CCCDP), I have undertaken substantive revisions to my POLS 300: Introduction to Public Policy course to incorporate a greater focus on racial and social justice in support of the University's 6 Point Plan. These changes are currently live in my Summer Session 1 section of this course (34561). In the pages that follow I document the specific changes which were made to the course consistent with the revisions plan approved for my acceptance into the CCCDP.

Revisions Plan and Changes

A) Weekly Course Content

As noted in my application to the CCCDP, my course is currently structured across 15 modules (13 substantive content and 2 examination [Modules 7 and 15]). To revise the weekly course content, I proposed the following:

Plan:

In pursuit of the goals of the CCDP, I plan to either 1) *adapt* one or more elements in *each* content module to have a focus on racial and social justice, or when not possible or more appropriate, to 2) add/replace an existing course element with a *new* element focused on racial and social justice.

Below you will find screenshots and descriptions of the changes which we made to the content Modules 1-6 and 8-14.

Module 1: This introductory module's question response journal was revised to incorporate the concept of social identity theory and to begin connecting how personal identity and group membership interact to shape a person's disposition towards policy and the direction it takes.



Module 1C: Question Response Journal ▼

A defining feature of American democracy is its pluralism (a diversity of views, opinions, backgrounds, etc) that purportedly protects against a tyranny of the majority. How can this feature affect the formation of coalitions needed for policy innovation?

Social Identity Theory posits the concept of "minimal categorization" which implies that human beings tend to facilitate the world through categorization, and thus categorize themselves and others. An important point of reference for categorization are social groups, which each consist of two or more people who define themselves as a member of the social group and thus share a common social identification. Once an individual identifies with a group, it takes over the social identity connected to it. The individual from then on distinguishes itself from others by this categorization.

Let's explore the idea of social identity and the role it can play in policymaking by first watching the following video clip:



Now consider your own identity and the things which it is composed of by answering the following questions:

- A) How do you define yourself, what is your social identity (young/old, white/black/etc, rich/poor, educated/uneducated, etc)?
- B) Which elements do you feel a stronger attachment to (e.g. which define you most) and which do you hold a weaker attachment to (e.g. which define you least)?

Now let's pivot and turn to policy by answering the following questions:

- C) List the issues which are important to you (e.g. what things are you concerned with)?
- D) Are there anything things when they pop up in the news, media, or your classes which you are disinterested in?

With these piece of information in tow, let's finally connect the two together by answering the following questions:

- E) How do you think your social identity has informed the issues you find important? Discuss your answer.

- To help you think through this, consider the idea that social identity can trigger specific policies, e.g., certain the demographic elements of your social identity make, for example, a debate on abortion may make more salient. Remember that since every individual possesses several social identities, some of which it will feel a stronger attachment to than to others, social identity conflict may occur (e.g certain things you might find important might be consistent with one element of your identity but inconsistent with another element).

Module 2: This module's question response journal previously considered governmental response to natural disasters, in particular, hurricanes. It was refocused and fleshed out to consider the role of federalism in the regulation of law enforcement.



Module 2B: Question Response Journal

Over the past few years, high-profile police-involved shootings and alleged instances of excessive force have generated significant public interest in state and local policing, entwining issues of race and socioeconomic status with the complicated role that federalism plays in both policymaking and implementation.

Consider the following:

Throughout U.S. history, our governments have found it difficult to regulate police behavior. The permissible limits of law enforcement bodies have always been set by state and local governments. By the founders' design, most law enforcement officers' authority is not derived from the federal government. Rather, it lies within a realm of authority known as the police power.

The police power is much broader than law enforcement itself. It includes authority to regulate moral life (with laws on drinking, gambling, and sex), build roads and schools, control capital and labor, and endow local governments with power.

- From this staggering amount of freedom of action, **states** (and their **local** communities within) are endowed with myriad rules and regulations on the use-of-force, officer discipline, record-keeping, transparency, and accountability.
- Yet the **federal** government, through its spending authority under the U.S. Constitution, has influenced and transformed policing as local/state police agencies today are more federally funded, they "dress" like the military, they police more federal initiatives, and the constitutional and fiscal boundaries between police and the federal government have been blurred.

Answer the following questions:

A) Given the above, which level of government should shoulder the blame (e.g. who do you find more responsible) for the historic and contemporary issues with policing in the United States? Discuss your answer.

B) Moving forward, some pundits have put forth an approach which works within the bounds of federalism and its jurisdictional complications. Consider the following proposal:

- The federal government, pursuant to its spending authority under the U.S. Constitution, should condition federal funding to state and local law enforcement agencies upon the state's development and implementation of regulations to reduce police misconduct and promote police accountability, for example – expanding training or reforming how use of force investigations are conducted, or providing grants to law enforcement agencies for the purchase of body-worn cameras for their officers. Yet, states and local entities will however be responsible for implementing institutional reform in their police agencies, and, they will retain the flexibility to develop locally tailored police accountability measures.

What do you think about this proposal? Which elements of it do you think will be most effective at addressing this issue? Which elements of it do you think will be least effective? Discuss your answers.

Module 3: This module's discussion board was retrofitted and further fleshed out to expand consideration of the Flint Water Crisis into the idea of environmental injustice/racism.



Module 3 Reflection - Changing Policy

Directions: Step 1) Answer the following questions & Step 2) Respond back to at least 2 students' Discussion Board posts by providing them a short reply concerning your reaction to something they said in their post

Hindsight is 20-20. Policymakers need to look back over and review policies (and the impact) after-the-fact to determine how well those policies are doing their job, determine the cause(s) of when policies fail to reach their intended goals, and make corrections moving forward. As such, studies are particular policy cases are useful tools to meet the aforementioned. Let's consider the Flint Water Crisis to get our discussion going:

1. Navigate over to the Natural Resource Defense Council and read about the Flint Water crisis (what happened, why it happened, and what's happening today) and take a look at the timeline concerning the Flint Water crisis: <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/flint-water-crisis-everything-you-need-know>

2. In 2017, a government-appointed civil rights commission in Michigan released a 129-page report indicating that environmental injustice/racism (e.g. how communities of color are unfairly impacted by pollution and environmental disasters) was a contributing cause to the Flint water crisis. While the report did not claim there were any specific violations of state civil rights laws, it highlights that "historical, structural and systemic racism combined with implicit bias" played a role in the problems, which still linger in the city's drinking water almost three years later." Watch the following clip to get a handle on this claim:



3. Finally, consider that as of today, for more than three years in a row, Flint's water has been meeting federal standards. The water is now testing at 6 parts per billion (ppb) which is much lower than the federal requirement of 15 ppb. Flint's water is one of the most monitored and testing the same as similar cities across the state and country.

4. After you have done so, answer the following questions:

A. What do you think is a "bad" policy, e.g. how would you define it or know a bad policy if you saw one?

B. Was the initial policy to change the water source for the city of Flint, MI in order to save the city money a "bad" policy? Why or Why Not?

C. According to the US Census, Flint is 57% black, 37% white, 4% Latino and the rest mixed race, and 40% of its residents live below the poverty line. Considering these statistics and the findings from the civil rights commission report, how does you believe race and poverty can impact the adoption of these types of policies? What should future policymakers be considering before the enact a new policy?

D. What are the consequences of a "bad" policy? Consider for example that some estimates indicate that over 80% of Flint residents continue to distrust the quality of the water.

Module 4: This module's question response journal was completely redone. The prior focused on an examination of gun violence and the need for accurate statistical data to develop better policy. These revisions instead have given the student's exposure to a Policy Report on the racial wealth gap, not only providing them with the key findings, but helping to support the development of their writing skills which are using in the courses scaffolded written assignment.



Module 4A: Question Response Journal ✓

This semester you will be developing a Policy Brief as part of your semester long scaffolded writing assignment (instructions and examples are found in the **Policy Brief** section of our course website). You can think of a Policy Brief (sometimes called a memo) as the little sibling document to the much more in-depth and lengthier Policy Report. At the end of the day however, they both make use of policy analysis and they both are utilized to help a policymaker develop **better** policy.

Let's take a look at the older sibling document to give you a flavor for what your Policy Brief could one day become.

1. Head over to https://www.demos.org/sites/default/files/publications/RacialWealthGap_2.pdf and check out a Policy Report on the racial wealth gap.
 2. The first thing you want to do is to read the Executive Summary on page 1 (of the document, not the .pdf numbering) and answer the following questions:
 - A. In your own words, what is the key takeaway from this Policy Report, e.g. what is it doing?
 - B. Now take a step back and think about the writing itself, how well(or not) do you feel the Executive Summary did what you noted in Question A? Discuss your answer.
 3. Next, read the Main Findings and answer the following questions:
 - C. As you read each of the bullet points associated with key findings, what are the authors using to convince you of their claims (e.g. what supporting information are they providing to show you that this is an issue)? Is there anything which sticks out to you? Discuss your answers.
 - D. How persuasive do you find these findings? What makes them so (or not so). Discuss your answer.
 4. Finally, read the last paragraph.
 - E. What are the authors advocating for? Based upon just your quick read of the Executive Summary and the Main Findings, how convinced are you that this is the approach necessary to begin addressin inequality? What more do you need from the authors? Discuss your answers.
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Module 5: This module's question response journal was retrofitted to focus the idea of state lead policy experimentation through the lens of inequalities in health insurance – access and outcomes.



Module 5D: Question Response Journal

Remember that policy makers and policy analysts often examine real world situations to come up with new policy alternatives. States act as laboratories of policy innovation, often coined "laboratories of democracy", trying novel social and economic experiments without risk to the rest of the country.

Considering the idea that states serve as innovators of policy, answer the following questions:

- A. Should states serve as "laboratories of democracy"? Why or why not?
- B. Is it useful and/or practical that national policy often is initiated at the state level? Why or why not?
- C. Are there any potential problems to such experimentation? Discuss your answer, making sure to consider the impact on groups, the economy, and the country as a whole?

- To help motivate this thinking, watch the following clip regarding the state-led expansion of Medicaid as an ongoing component of the Affordable Care Act (ACA):



- Then check out which states (and where they are located) have and have not expanded Medicaid: <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/status-of-state-medicaid-expansion-decisions-interactive-map/>

- D. Should there be more regulation over public policy at the state level? Why or why not?
- E. Should states be given less discretionary authority (e.g. the ability to decide whether or not to take certain courses of action when implementing existing laws)? Why or why not?

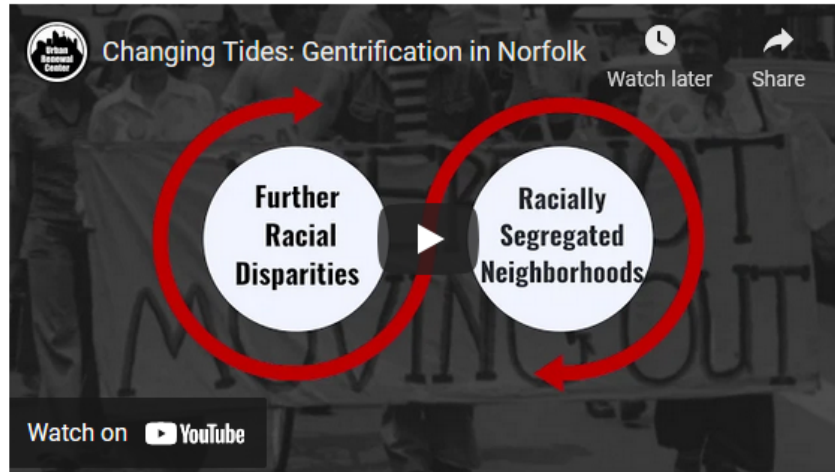
Module 6: This module's question response journal was completely redone. Previously the assignment involved students applying the concept of the policy evaluative criteria of *effectiveness* in regard to foreign policy. Instead, this question response journal was refocused and redeveloped towards examining the *effectiveness* of national housing policy and its impact in many of the students' backyards -- Norfolk.



Module 6A: Question Response Journal

Depending on what policy you are concerned with, you may face some difficulty in trying to determine its effectiveness. To understand this, consider the idea of segregation in housing.

1. First, watch this short video clip to provide some background on the history of segregation in Norfolk and the impact which lingers today.



2. With that knowledge in hand, consider a policy which was enacted to address this problem, The Fair Housing Act of 1968. This policy was meant to do two things: 1) outlaw individual acts of housing discrimination and 2) foster integration. It was the first time that Congress declared it illegal for private individuals to discriminate on the basis of race in the sale or rental of housing. This was no small thing. An early civil-rights statute, adopted in 1866, said that all citizens "shall have the same right . . . as is enjoyed by white citizens thereof to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold, and convey real and personal property," but this protection was treated as addressing only government action. Before 1968, it was assumed to be perfectly legal for owners to refuse to sell homes to black families, or for a private bank to deny a potential black homebuyer a loan, or for a broker to lie and say that no homes were available.

2. Answer the following questions:

A. Think back to your reading -- what does an *effective* policy look like?

B. Based upon this definition, does the Fair Housing Act of 1968 meet the criteria of *effectiveness*? Why do you say this?

C. What measures should be used to assess its *effectiveness* (e.g. what should we look at to know if it is effective or not)? Discuss your answer.

Module 8: This module's question response journal was further developed to move beyond simply the idea of unemployment and full employment, but to consider this idea in the context of the current economic crisis and moving forward the impact on minority populations.



Module 8B: Question Response Journal

In considering the issues of unemployment and full employment, the impact of COVID19 presents a unique chance to examine the role of exogenous shocks to our labor system.

In the time before COVID19 hit, the US was experiencing a very interesting phenomena - there were **more** jobs available than people out of work to fill them.

1. Watch the following video and answer the associated questions:



A. We often think that low unemployment is a good goal, but after watching the video is this still the case? Why/why not?

B. What was problematic about this situation of more jobs than people to fill them?

2. Let's now dig deeper into this idea. Think back to the overall unemployment rate you examined in Module 5 (if you need a reminder, check out the interactive chart [Here](https://www.macrotrends.net/2508/unemployment-rate-by-race)). If you look below the surface of the average unemployment rate, you will observe that labor market differences existed by race. Labor market differences among racial groups are associated with many factors, not all of which are measurable. These factors include variations in educational attainment across the groups; the occupations and industries in which the groups work; the geographic areas of the country in which the groups are concentrated, including whether they tend to reside in urban or rural settings; and the degree of discrimination encountered in the workplace.

Head over and take a look at the interactive graph at: <https://www.macrotrends.net/2508/unemployment-rate-by-race>

C. What is your initial impression of the data and trends? Discuss your answer.

D. What do these lines tell you about the labor system in the United States more generally? Discuss your answer.

3. While the major racial groups were experiencing record (or at least near record) low levels of unemployment heading into 2020, precautions intended to slow the spread of COVID-19 led U.S. employers to shed more than 20 million jobs — a historic decline in both size and speed. Despite the rallying cry during the pandemic that “We’re all in this together,” and while it is true that COVID-19 has affected everyone in some way, the magnitude and nature of the impact has been anything but universal.

Head back over and take a look at the interactive graph at: <https://www.macrotrends.net/2508/unemployment-rate-by-race>

- Click on the link for “5 Years” you can get a closer look at what has occurred over the last year.

E. What does your examination of the data and trends during this recent economic recession indicate to you? Discuss your answer.

4. Finally, let's draw a conclusion for policymakers who considering new policy to address labor issues and economic development heading out of the pandemic, using the current and prior context. To help motivate your thinking, consider the fact that when the Great Recession began (2008), Black workers' unemployment rate increased to double digits and remained that high for more than six years. In comparison, the unemployment rate among white workers never reached double digits during the Great Recession or its recovery. Further, it took more than 10 years for Black workers' incomes to return to their pre-recession levels.

F. With what you have observed concerning the current recession, as well as that from the prior, how should a policymaker approach developing a policy which is both *effective* and *equitable*? Is this possible? Discuss your answer.

Module 9: This module's question response journal was completely redone to again provide the students exposure to a significant problem address by a policy brief. Students examined the impact of how COVID19 highlighted inequities in healthcare by race. In doing so, it further allowed the students to continued developing their writing skills in support of the scaffolded course written assignment.



Module 9A: Question Response Journal ✓

Whether you carry health insurance is directly related to where, when, and whether you seek health care, and to your overall health. Disparities in health care coverage and access exist across all racial and ethnic lines. Health insurance is the financial gateway to preventive care, screenings, disease management, and prescription drugs. As the National Institutes of Health, explains, "the voluntary, employment-based approach to insurance coverage in the United States functions less like a system and more like a sieve. There are many ways to slip through the holes."

Let's take a look at how this plays out in health disparities as it relates to COVID19 by examining another policy brief at: <https://aspe.hhs.gov/system/files/pdf/265206/covid-equity-issue-brief.pdf>

First, scroll down and read the section titled "Drivers of COVID-19 Disparities"

A. According to the brief, what are the main drivers?

B. In your own words which do you find to be the root causes of the problem and which do you find to be the proximate?

C. If you were a policymaker reading this brief, since you don't have the time nor resources to tackle all of these causes, which do would you want to try and address through a policy response. Discuss your answer.

Next, scroll down and read the section titled "Policy Solutions and Next Steps"

C. The authors provide 4 policy solutions to address this issue. Do you think they provide enough detail for each policy alternative for the reader to understand what they are advocating for? Discuss your response?

D. If you had to make a recommendation solely based upon what you have read in the brief, which of the options presented provides the best strategy to achieve health equity and reduce or eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in responding to the COVID-19 (remember policymakers suffer from a scarcity of time and resources and cannot pursue all options presented)? Discuss your answer.

Module 10: This module's question response journal was retrofitted and further developed to expand the concept of poverty and its connection to both income and demographics.



Module 10A: Question Response Journal

Using the Federal Poverty Line, we can see who thus is above and below it and further where poverty exists in our society.

1. Take a look at the map located at https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/saipe/#/?map_geoSelector=aa_c.
 2. Hover over the map of the United States and observe the level of poverty in different areas of the country. Click the "3 line" button for the "Legend" in the bottom-left corner to see the range of the percent of people in poverty.
 3. Use the map to record the following information in your Journal entry:
 - A. Zoom in and see if you can find where you live on the map (not specifically but the area closest). Record the name of the area (when you hover over an area, the box that appears will have the name of the area in black) and the poverty level.
 - B. Using the legend (the "3 line" button for the "Legend" in the bottom-left corner), locate 3 areas throughout the country where you observe the highest levels level of poverty. Record the names of each of these areas and their respective poverty levels. ****Remember where these specific areas were at on the map.****
- Note: If at any point the map gets funky or doesn't render properly, you can click the "Reset" button in the lefthand navigation menu.
4. Now check out a different map located at: <http://www.justicemap.org/>
 5. Return to each of these 4 areas you have recorded by clicking on this new map. A similar box will appear with the same names of the areas now in grey.
- Note: If you zoom in on the map, do not scroll in too much, as the grid will move from the area names into "Census Tracts" and then "Block Groups." If it does this zoom out a click at a time and it will move up through the layers back to the area names.
6. For each of the 4 areas which you recorded poverty levels earlier, a) record the racial breakdown information and b) record the median household income.

With this information in-hand (and reported in your Journal entry - entries which do not report these data will earn no points for this Journal assignment), answer the following questions:

- A. Thinking about the first map you examined, what is your initial reaction to seeing the levels of poverty across the country (think about the range of the index in the bottom-left corner)? Discuss your answer.
- B. Where did you observe the most poverty (e.g. where in the country generally did you observe)? Where do you observe the least poverty? Does this surprise you? Discuss your answer.
- C. For the specific areas which you recorded which had some of the worst poverty in the country, compare and contrast both the racial distributions and the median household incomes.
- D. From these findings, what is the general takeaway as it relates to poverty, race, and income? What is your overall thoughts on this when you take a step back and really consider the implications of this general takeaway. Discuss your answer.

Module 11: This module's question response journal was completely redone. The prior entry had student's examining the U.S. educational system in comparison to that in other countries, so as to evaluate where it was in relation and what could be done to address it. Instead, this entry was redeveloped to consider the concept of educational inequities and how they have been illuminated by COVID19.



Module 11C: Question Response Journal ✓

The coronavirus pandemic exposed long-standing inequities baked into the country's public education system, and now, over a year after schools shuttered for more than 50 million children, parents finally have their first glimpse at the depths of the racial disparities that stand to impact the U.S. for years to come. The Institute of Education Sciences, in conjunction with the federal government, conducted its first assessment of school reopenings, which drew data from a nationally representative sample of 7,000 rural, suburban and urban schools to assess how students are receiving their education (if you want view ongoing monthly wave reports check out the IES [website](#)). The data were broken down by race, economic status, disability and English learner status.

This report reveals that Black, Hispanic and Asian students in public schools were more likely to receive remote learning than their white counterparts. Further, of the schools offering only remote learning, most schools provided two hours or less of instructional time, with between 5-10% of some grade levels receiving no live instruction whatsoever in their remote learning.

2. With these findings in mind, answer the following questions:

- A. While all students are suffering, the country's most disadvantaged – those who came into the pandemic with the fewest opportunities – are on track to exit with the greatest learning loss. What do you imagine will be the long term consequences of this pandemic on these students? Discuss your answer.
 - B. How do you distinguish between equity and equality in school? Are they the same thing? How do parents and policymakers define and differentiate between equity and equality? Discuss your answer.
 - C. How can policymakers we use the findings from this ongoing research to develop policies to address inequity in education? Discuss your answer.
 - D. Put on your policymaker hat and consider what can be done to address this problem? Outline a policy alternative you would like to enact which you believe will address this problem. Discuss why you think it will be(or won't be) *effective, efficient, equitable, politically feasible, and socially acceptable*.
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Module 12: This module's question response journal previously considered the ethical side to policymaking and how it should be applied to climate change. The entry was refocused to the idea of Superfund sites, getting students to consider the concept which quite literally exists in their own backyards, and then to consider it from the perspective of environmental justice.



Module 12D: Question Response Journal

Toxic dumping, landfills, lead poisoning, air pollution, brownfields, hazardous waste disposal, safe drinking water, sitting industrial facilities, environmental inequality... These are among the worries that many people have to contend with, while most others do not. Why do some shoulder the burden of environmental hazards more than others? Let's focus on one particular issue -- superfund sites -- to examine this question.

Spread across the country are thousands of contaminated sites where hazardous waste was dumped, left out in the open, or otherwise improperly managed. These sites include manufacturing facilities, processing plants, landfills and mining sites. In the late 1970s, toxic waste dumps such as Love Canal (check out [this clip](#) to learn more about this event) received national attention when the public learned about the risks to human health and the environment posed by contaminated sites. In 1980 Congress in response established the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) -- called the Superfund -- to fund and empower the EPA to clean up contaminated sites and force the parties responsible for the contamination (when available and viable) to either perform cleanups or reimburse the government for EPA-led cleanup work.

1. First head over to the following page: <https://www.epa.gov/superfund/search-superfund-sites-where-you-live>
 2. Scroll down to the interactive map located under the section title "Superfund National Priorities List (NPL) Where You Live Map." This map shows you the list of sites of national priority among the known releases or threatened releases of hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants. This list serves to guide the EPA in determining which sites warrant further investigation.
 3. Scroll around the map, zooming in and out, observing where these superfund sites are located. Further, take a look and see how many are located around where you live.
 4. Having done this, answer the following questions:
 - A. What is your initial reaction to frequency of superfund sites across the country? Discuss your answer.
 - B. Where did you observe the greatest density of these sites (e.g. where in the country generally did you observe)? Where do you observe the least? Does this surprise you? Discuss your answer.
 - C. What was your reaction to the potential existence of one or more superfund sites near your home? Discuss your answer.
 5. Finally, check out the recent EPA report on the populations living around these locations: <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-09/documents/webpopulationssuperfundsites9.28.15.pdf>
 - C. What is the takeaway from the EPA report? What is your initial reaction to this takeaway? Discuss your answers.
 - D. In these context of these findings, advocates generally are making an ethical case for *environmental justice* which is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.
 - Fair treatment means that no population bears a disproportionate share of negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or from the execution of federal, state, and local laws; regulations; and policies.
 - Meaningful involvement requires effective access to decision makers for all, and the ability in all communities to make informed decisions and take positive actions to produce environmental justice for themselves.
- Based upon this definition, do you believe there is an ethical case for environmental justice for populations adversely impacted by these superfund sites? Why or why not?
- E. Today policymakers are considering what approach should be at the heart of a US national environmental policy - pollution, resources, or energy. Yet, in doing so they have to consider the policies they will put in place to meet the goals. Sometimes lost in this conversation is that while many policies can and should be practical, *to what degree should we ought to adopt policies for moral reasons*. What are both the costs and benefits to pursuing policy adoption under the this framework? Discuss your answer.

Module 13: This module's question response journal was further developed to expand on the policy evaluative criteria of *equity* and *liberty* and challenge the students to consider the negative impact of national security policies on specific racial groups, all in the name of the greater good.



Module 13C: Question Response Journal

Many students today were born after 9/11, and have only known a world where things like full body screenings at the airport are normal. In the world today, Americans have traded individual liberties for safety. Yet to what degree are you willing to allow in pursuit of security?

1) First, consider the role of the Federal government in surveillance efforts:



2) Next, consider a differing perspective on the what the Federal government has been doing:



3) Considering both of these videos, answer the following questions:

- A) How much authority should the Federal government have to gather information about ordinary patterns which might be an alert to risk for terrorists? Discuss your answer.
- B) Should all phone calls and email messages be monitored for such patterns? What about Web browsing and posting to social media network sites such as Facebook? Discuss your answer.
- C) At what point does such government surveillance cross the line and become an invasion of privacy or even a violation of Federal laws that are designed to protect citizens' civil liberties even as the nation pursues its national security goals? Discuss your answer.

4) Finally, consider how this has played out in various leaked reports: <https://theintercept.com/2019/10/29/foi-surveillance-black-activists/>

- D) How does your read of this story impact your answers above? Discuss your answer.
- E) Is the curtailing of the civil liberties of select racial and ethnic groups acceptable if it is in pursuit of the goals of a nation as a whole? Discuss your answer.
- F) With this in mind consider, consider a surveillance policy like the Patriot Act (you can get a brief synopsis of this policy [here](#) as well as in your textbook reading), how do these policies score (high or low) on the evaluative criteria of *effectiveness*, *equity*, and *liberty*? What are the consequences of trying to enhance one of these criteria, for example what happens to *equity* and *liberty* when you try to increase *effectiveness*? Discuss your answer.

Module 14: This module's question response journal only required a minor revision to prompt the student's to perhaps consider a major policy challenge focused on race (given the prior module's redeveloped assets) through the lens of major policy approaches.



Module 14B: Question Response Journal

Think back to the TED talk you watched way back in Module 4 by Vasiliki (Vass) Bednar who talk about making public policy more fun (You can rewatch the video if you want to jog your memory: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wXYsAsA5yVSY>). She spoke about "Wicked Problems."

This idea was first introduced back in 1973, by design theorists Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber. In doing so they argued that *wicked problems* have 10 important characteristics:

- 1) They do not have a definitive formulation.
- 2) They do not have a "stopping rule." In other words, these problems lack an inherent logic that signals when they are solved.
- 3) Their solutions are not true or false, only good or bad.
- 4) There is no way to test the solution to a wicked problem.
- 5) They cannot be studied through trial and error. Their solutions are irreversible so, as Rittel and Webber put it, "every trial counts."
- 6) There is no end to the number of solutions or approaches to a wicked problem.
- 7) All wicked problems are essentially unique.
- 8) Wicked problems can always be described as the symptom of other problems.
- 9) The way a wicked problem is described determines its possible solutions.
- 10) Planners, that is those who present solutions to these problems, have no right to be wrong. Planners are liable for the consequences of the solutions they generate; the effects can matter a great deal to the people who are touched by those actions.

With this idea of a *wicked problem* in mind:

Consider one of the following major policy challenges (e.g. a wicked problem).

- Reforming health care
- Reducing/eliminating racial inequities in educational access and attainment
- Reforming major federal entitlement programs (Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid)
- Redesigning the tax code
- Developing a national energy or climate change policy

Answer the following questions:

- 1) What are the advantages and disadvantages of adopting incremental policy change within this large, complicated issue?
- 2) Similarly, what are the major advantages and disadvantages of pursuing policy change that is more far reaching or radical, whether the ideas are endorsed by the left or right side of the political spectrum?

B) *Policy Brief*

Further, I proposed making several changes to the development of the key written assignment for the course – the policy brief. I proposed the following:

Plan:

In pursuit of the goals of the CCCDP, I plan to 1) revise the instructions for the policy brief. In doing so, I will revise the Part 1 instructions (Part 1 of 3 of the scaffolded assignment) to include an example problem which is focused on a salient racial or social justice issue (which I can update semester to semester depending on what is occurring in society/politics at that point in time) and 2) provide as an exemplar a completed policy brief from a prior student which was focused on a salient racial or social justice problem.

In accordance with my original plan, I have completed the above. Attached below are screenshots from the revised Part 1 instructions, the link to the policy brief exemplar (which ended up being a great illustration of student developed policy alternative assessment), and a copy of that exemplar:



Policy Brief Part 1: Identifying Your Problem

How do I identify a problem for my policy brief?

Remember that public policies are nothing more than the actions government takes to address a problem in society. As such, to write a policy brief, you need to locate a problem which requires the attention of the government.

An effective policy brief must propose a solution to a well-defined problem that can be addressed at the level of policy. This may sound easy, but it can take a lot of work to think of a problem in a way that is open to policy action.

For example, "institutionalized racism" might be a problem that you feel strongly about, but you can't simply implement a policy to "eliminate institutionalized racism." In order to make it the subject of a policy brief, you'll need to look for research on the topic and narrow it down. Think about a particular area which this problem is taking place in which to direct your time and resources, e.g. are you concerned with institutionalized racism in local police departments, government hiring and promotions, or educational opportunities. Narrowing your focus would allow you to write a brief that can propose concrete policy action.

For another example, let's say that you wanted to address children's health. This is a big issue, and too broad to serve as the focus of a policy brief, but it could serve as a starting point for research. As you begin to research studies on children's health, you might decide to zoom in on the more specific issue of childhood obesity. You'll need to consult the research further to decide what factors contribute to it in order to propose policy changes. Is it lack of exercise, nutritional deficiencies, a combination of these, or something else? Choosing one or another of these issues, your brief would zoom in even further to specific proposals that might include exercise initiatives, nutritional guidelines, or school lunch programs.

The key is that you define the problem and its contributing factors as specifically as possible so that some sort of concrete policy action (at the local, state, or national level) is feasible.

Assignment Instructions

Use the following questions to begin thinking about your policy brief's purpose, audience, and contribution:

1. What problem will your brief address?

- What is the problem?
- Where does the problem exist?
- Who or what is affected?
- How did the problem develop?
- What are the major causes?

2. Who is the audience?

- Why is the problem important to them?
- What do you know about the audience (e.g., technical knowledge, political or organizational culture or constraints, exposure to the issue, potential openness to the message)?



Prior Student Example 2 - Policy Brief Part 3

Attached Files:  [Student Example 2.pdf](#)  (323.777 KB)

Take a look at the analysis section (Policy Options) of this prior student's policy brief. Whereas the Introduction needs work (e.g. lacks significant detail showing the scope and magnitude of the problem), this section of the brief provides as a nice example for how to apply evaluative criteria in such a manner that you are comparing the two options against each other in a manner necessary to persuade the reader towards your recommendation.

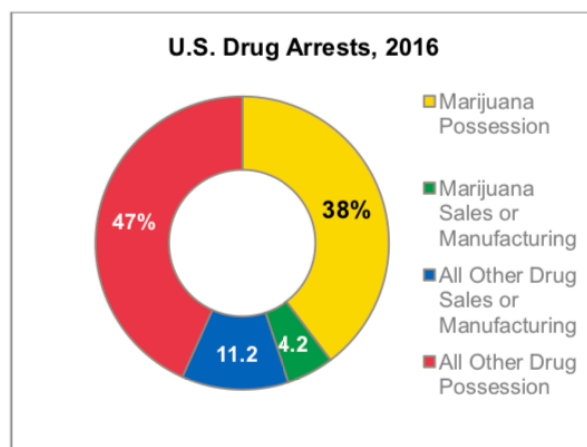
Reducing Racial Disparities in the Criminal Justice System Through the Legalization Marijuana

Executive Summary

The racial disparities that exist within the modern criminal justice system are the result of decades of systemic racism. This policy brief outlines how the legalization of marijuana is just one step in beginning to remedy these issues. Black Americans are more than 10 as likely as white Americans to be sent to prison for drug crimes, and marijuana charges account for the largest portion of drug arrests in the United States (Wegman; Drug Policy Alliance). By federally legalizing marijuana for recreational purposes, the potential for racial bias in this can be reduced significantly.

Introduction

By the time you have finished this brief, at least one person will have been arrested for a marijuana offense, and statistically, it is likely that person will be Black (Murdock). It is impossible to talk about racism in the United States without talking about the criminal justice system. The American criminal justice system has been a leading perpetrator of racial injustice for decades, and without dramatic changes to its policies, it is unlikely to change. Marijuana arrests account for the highest proportion of drug arrests in the United States making federal legalization of the substance a good place to start in addressing these racial disparities (Drug Policy Alliance). Presently, the United States government is spending billions of dollars on an annual basis to arrest, sentence, and detain individuals on marijuana charges despite public opinion steadily swaying in favor of federal legalization. The copious benefits to eliminating arrests for a crime that is deeply entrenched in racism provide ample evidence that it is time for the federal government to legalize recreational marijuana.



Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation⁷,

*Because of rounding, the percentages may not add up to 100.0

Source: Drug Policy Alliance, 2018

Policy Options

1. The Decriminalization of Marijuana

The decriminalization of marijuana refers to when states decide to remove the possibility of criminal charges for individuals found in possession of the drug. Instead of jail time, offenders face civil penalties such as fines, education programs, or treatment programs (Drug Policy

Alliance). Presently, 25 states and the District of Columbia have voted to decriminalize marijuana use and possession (NRML). States that have supported this legislation fall on all sides of the political spectrum, from more historically liberal states, such as Massachusetts, to more conservative, states such as Mississippi. The breadth of support for this option demonstrates that it is politically feasible to introduce similar policy at a federal level. Further, there is significant evidence indicating that federal decriminalization of marijuana would be socially feasible. A major concern of decriminalization has been that it may encourage more use of that drug within the community, but evidence has made it clear that this is not the case. One study that took place across multiple states showed only a 2% increase in reported marijuana use amongst high school students in states that have decriminalized the substance. Similar studies have found no increase in usage (Austin). In a similar vein, there has been no proof of that the decriminalization of marijuana causes the crime rate to rise (Austin). The rebuttal of these common concerns with decriminalization indicate that the most salient public concerns with decriminalization are false.

Decriminalization of marijuana would also be an efficient way to address the disproportionate arrests of people of color. Transitioning into decriminalization would be fairly simple for law enforcement because it requires little substantial change in practices. Decriminalization eliminates strain on the court system because defendants are fined rather than sentenced, allowing law enforcement and the judicial system to redirect their attention to other, more pressing public safety concerns (Austin).

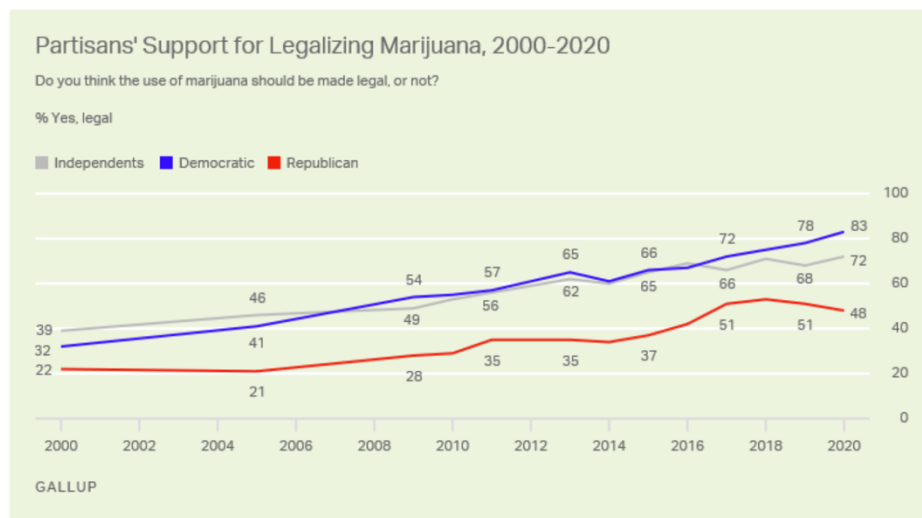
Where decriminalization begins to struggle is in its lack of effectiveness and equity. There is a potential for marijuana arrests to in fact increase due to the reduced administrative burden they present. When marijuana offenses are considered civil infractions or even misdemeanors without jail time arrests become significantly less paperwork-intensive (Drug Policy Alliance). Despite marijuana offenses not requiring as severe punishments, even minor offenses on individual's record can affect their ability to get a job or receive a loan. Most unfortunately, however, is the fact that simply reducing the consequences for these crimes does little to address the racial disparities in drug arrests. People of color will likely continue suffer disproportionate arrests for marijuana possession and use because there is little fundamental change in the way communities are policed.

2. The Legalization of Marijuana

Complete legalization of marijuana has far more national and bipartisan support than is often recognized. Approximately 48% of Republicans, 72% of independents, and 83% of Democrats in the United states support legalization, for a total of 68% of the adult population (Brenan). As of now, 15 states and the District of Columbia have made the decision to legalize marijuana at the state level (NORML). This data indicates that this legislation would be both politically and socially feasible.

Marijuana legalization is also a highly efficient option. It reduces the number of crimes law enforcement must pursue at no cost to public safety. Enforcing present marijuana laws is estimated to cost approximately \$7.6 billion nationally, with \$3.7 being spent by police forces, \$853 million within by the courts, and \$3.1 billion in corrections (Austin). Legalization would allow for these funds to be reallocated to other essential aspects the of criminal justice system that address more destructive and violent offenses.

This legislation would also be effective in addressing the racial disparities in incarceration rates. Of the 1.65 million drug arrests made nation-wide in 2018, 40% were for marijuana offenses (Gramlich). Despite using marijuana at the same rates, Blacks are approximately 3.7 times more likely to be arrested for a marijuana offense than Whites, and 10 times more likely to go to prison as the result of a drug offense (Wegman). This results in the Black population suffering far more than any other as a result of present marijuana legislation. By eliminating the possibility of arrest for anyone, regardless of race, for marijuana offenses, there are less opportunities for racial biases to motivate an arrest. This also allows for a far more equitable policy, as it will provide the most help the population who has faced the greatest consequences from systemic racism within the criminal justice system.



Source: Brennan, 2020

Recommendation

Careful examination of these policy options makes it clear that complete legalization of marijuana would provide the greatest relief to the Black communities that are disproportionately incarcerated for drug crimes. Federal legalization of recreation marijuana is the first of many impactful steps in reducing the racial discrimination that exists within the modern criminal justice system. By passing marijuana legalization legislation, Congress can begin to dismantle the systems that perpetuate the oppression of minorities within the United States.

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C) Syllabus

Finally, changes to this course did signify a significant focus on racial and social justice concerns, and as such a revision to the course syllabus was necessary. I proposed the following:

Plan:

In pursuit of the goals of the CCCDP, I plan to revise to the course learning goals as stated in the course syllabus to include a focus on exploring and consider issues associated with racial and social justice.

In accordance with my original plan, in my syllabus under the Learning Goals, I have added the following language:

Students will improve their ability to effectively participate in a multicultural society by identifying and evaluating how has race been intertwined with public policy development in the 20th century and the role of public policies and programs in mitigating or exacerbating inequality and social injustice.

I have attached a screen shot of this below:

POLS 300: Introduction to Public Policy

DESCRIPTION

This course explores the politics of public policy in the United States. We will begin with an examination of how American political institutions and culture influence public policy making in the United States, paying close attention to the politics at work in turning ideas into policies. The course will then take an introductory tour of policy analysis—the formulation and evaluation of policy alternatives to address public problems—paying close attention to how politics shapes the fate of policy proposals. Finally, the balance of the course will be spent applying what we have learned to several policy areas. Although the course explores politics and policymaking primarily in the American setting, we will make some cross-national comparisons when doing so helps to illuminate the American case.

Learning Goals

Courses at this learning level explore key themes and related issues in greater depth. Students learn about the research process, learn how to observe problems in the political environment, and consider how best to go about solving them. Upon completion of this course, students should be able to demonstrate a critical understanding of:

- the organization of public policy as an academic field
- the political institutions involved in the development and formation of public policy
- the interplay of ideas, interests, and institutions—in short, politics—in policy making
- the major theories of policymaking and the policymaking process
- the types of analysis conducted and political judgments made in evaluating policy alternatives
- the major laws and programs in several important policy areas

Students should be able to demonstrate an ability to distill, synthesize, and communicate research findings in a policy area of their choosing.

Students will improve their ability to effectively participate in a multicultural society by identifying and evaluating how race has been intertwined with public policy development in the 20th century and the role of public policies and programs in mitigating or exacerbating inequality and social injustice.

How we will achieve these goals? The course will consist of 15 Modules. Through reading assignments, video lectures, online class and reflective discussion, written assignments, and exams, we will describe, explain, and evaluate basic aspects of the policy making process.

How can you reach you me?

I will make myself readily available to you in a variety of ways:

- 1) You can contact me anytime at my email address which I check fairly frequently: bmelusky@odu.edu
- 2) Each week I am available to meet digitally via Zoom. Please email me to schedule a time to discuss any questions or concerns you have or to discuss further anything from the course. I will email you a link right before our scheduled time which you merely need to click to join the video meeting. If you want more detailed instructions on how to join a Zoom meeting, please see the short video clip located at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFhAEoCF7jg>

Taken together, the above revisions to my POLS 300: Introduction to Public Policy course represent a significant focus on racial and social justice in support of the University's 6 Point Plan which better equips these future policymakers to think about how to tackle some of the most wicked problems facing our communities, country, and greater world today.

I thank you for this great opportunity to reshape elements of my course.

Benjamin Melusky, Ph.D.



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