Gender and the Welfare State: Dividing Citizens

POSC 459 — Social Welfare Politics and Policy

Week 13 · Wednesday, November 18

Mettler 1998, Dividing Citizens, chs. 1, 5, 6



Poster: Social Security Board, 1936–37 · public domain

Today

1. From Monday to 1935
2. Mettler's question
3. Two kinds of citizenship
4. Building unemployment insurance (UI) and Aid to Dependent Children (ADC)
5. Running them, 1936–1950
6. Mettler and Michener, side by side
7. Paper 5

From Monday to 1935

Monday, Michener: where states got to choose, racial gaps followed

Today, Mettler: Congress faced that choice in **1935**

What to run nationally? What to leave to the states?



Roosevelt signs the Social Security Act, Aug. 14, 1935 · FDR Library, CC BY 2.0

Michener 2020, pp. 550–51 · Mettler 1998, pp. 1–6

Mettler's question

Before 1935: what citizenship meant was "defined primarily by the individual states"

New Deal: Washington steps in, but only for some

Structured governance (her method): look at how a program is designed and who runs it, then at what kind of citizens it makes

Think: a check from Washington, set by formula, vs. a county caseworker's decision

Social citizenship: the right to basic economic security, as a member of the community

Mettler 1998, pp. 1–5, 9 · figure 1, p. 5

Divided citizenship

	Included as individual wage earners (“liberal”)	Included by role, relationship, or need (“nonliberal”)
Run nationally: standard rules	**Old Age Insurance** **Fair Labor Standards Act** full-time wage earners: mostly white men	**Old Age and Survivors' Insurance (1939)** wives and widows, through husbands
Run by the states: rules vary, local discretion	**Unemployment Insurance** a hybrid: national for most white men; state-level for women and nonwhite men	**Aid to Dependent Children** **Old Age Assistance** **protective labor laws** women and nonwhite men

Redrawn from Mettler, table 1, p. 23 · labels from pp. 5, 23–25

Who counted as a worker?





1935: farm workers and domestic workers left out of Social Security and unemployment insurance

Domestic servants on relief, 1934: more than **two-thirds** Black

Mettler, pp. 20, 26 n. 78, 136 · Photos: Russell Lee, Oklahoma, 1939; Marion Post Wolcott, Atlanta, 1939 · FSA/OWI, Library of Congress

Building unemployment insurance

- Perkins's committee: unemployment insurance (UI) is "the cornerstone"
- **3%** federal payroll tax on employers; a state with its own UI law keeps **90%**
- So states set benefits and who qualifies
- Built to replace "male breadwinners'" wages



Perkins, Jan. 22, 1935 · Harris & Ewing, LOC

Mettler, ch. 5, pp. 120–28, 136; ch. 6, p. 144

Building Aid to Dependent Children (ADC)

- Designed by two Children's Bureau women: Lenroot and Abbott
- Run by the states; Washington pays ⅓
- Congress cut the "decency and health" benefit standard
- Benefit ceiling: **$18** a month, first child; **$12** each additional
- For the mother herself: nothing ("no caretakers' benefits")



Federal Security Agency publicity print, 1940s · FSA/OWI, Library of Congress

Mettler, ch. 5, pp. 120, 129–40

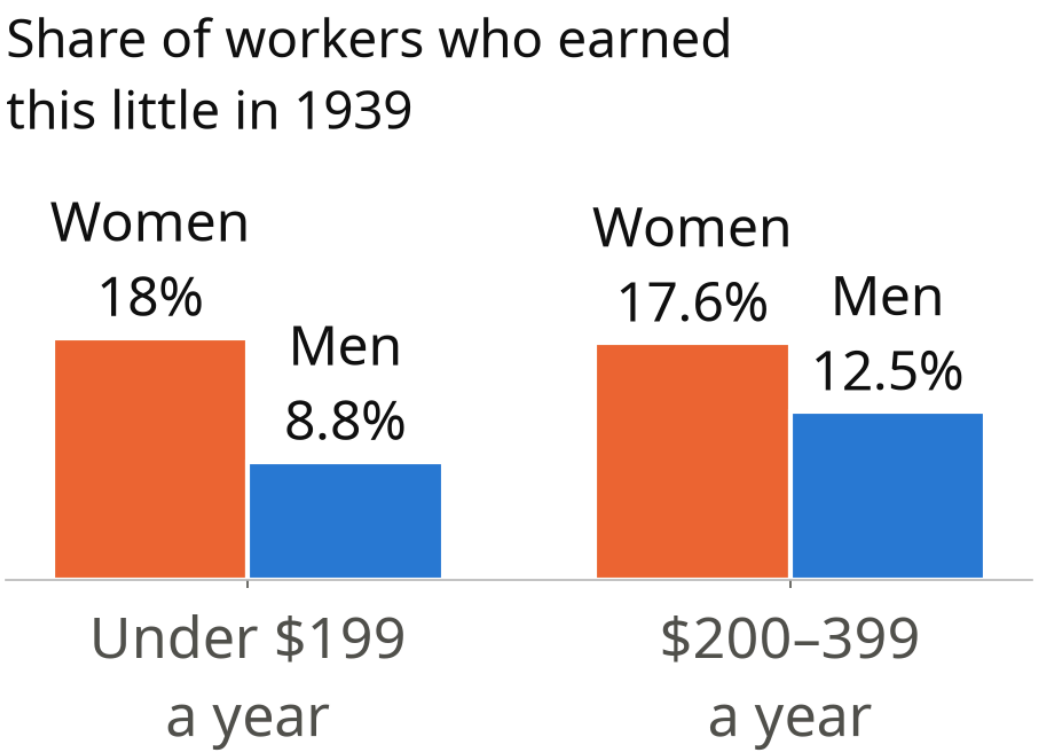
1935: "fairly comparable ground"

	UI	ADC
Run by	national and state together	national and state together
Who qualifies: set by	states	states
Merit-based hiring required	no	no
Paid for by	payroll tax on employers, held in Washington	grants: **$1 federal for every $2 state**

Same start in 1935. What split them later: how each was paid for and run.

Mettler, table 4, p. 142; pp. 141–43

UI in practice: who qualifies?



To qualify: earn at least **$100–300** a year (15 states, 1939)

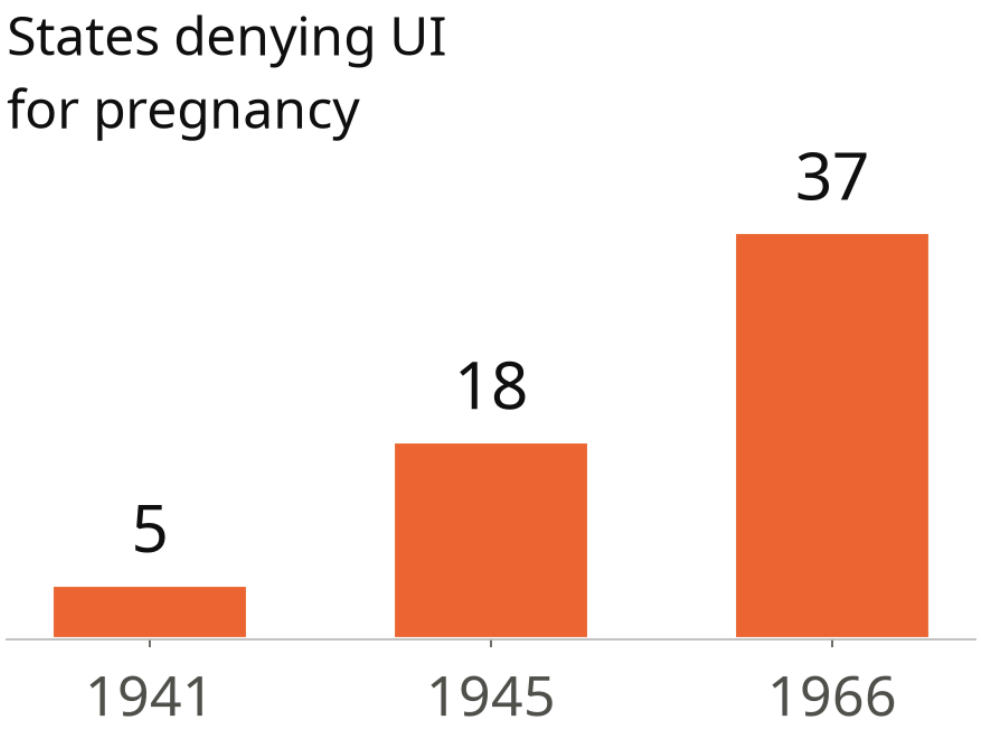
More women than men earned too little

"Available for work" = full-time, daytime

Quit for family reasons (a "domestic quit"): no benefits

Mettler, ch. 6, pp. 150–53 · 1940 Census, cited

Pregnancy and marriage rules



Pregnant: disqualified, or ruled "unavailable" for work

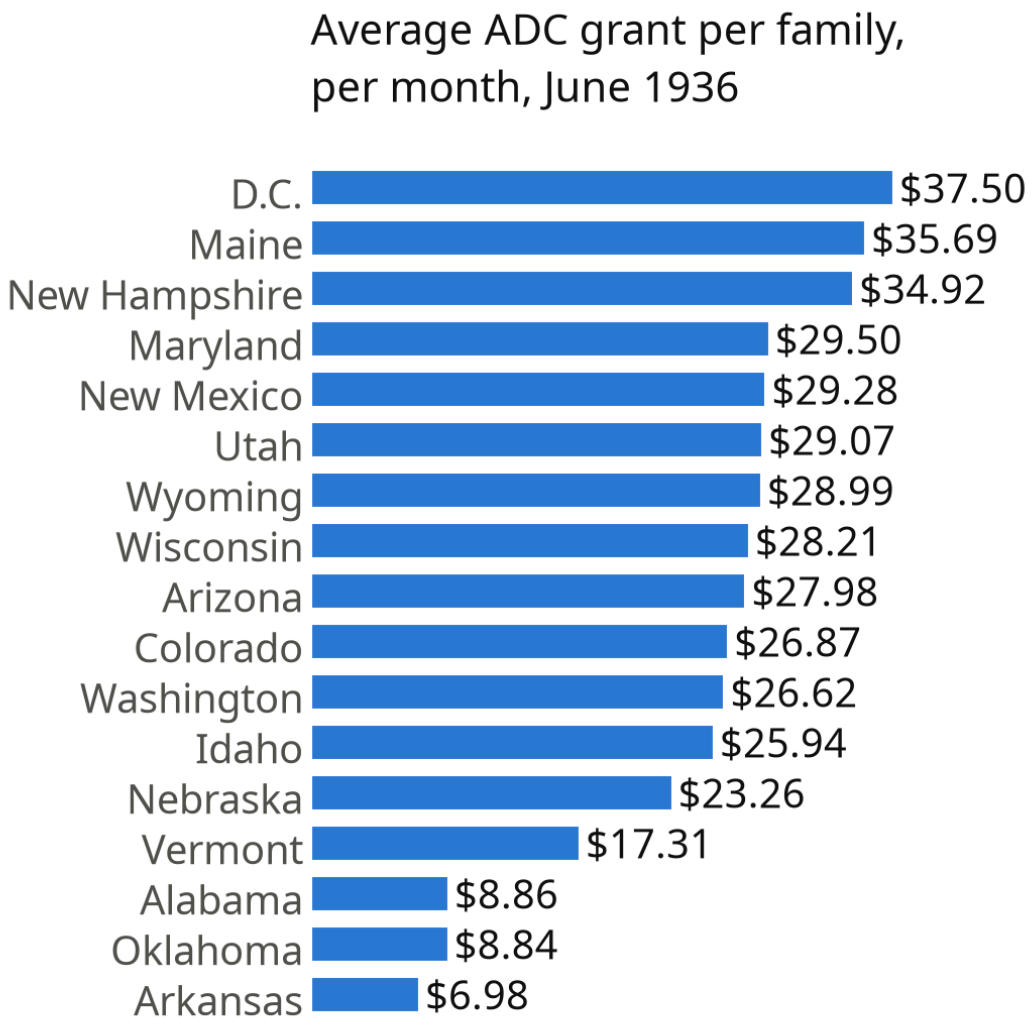
Quit a job to marry: disqualified in **17** states by 1945

"UI acquired a janus-faced character"

Janus-faced = two-faced: a right for some, a barrier for others

Mettler, ch. 6, pp. 154–57, table 5

ADC in practice: it depended on where you lived



Dec. 1937: **$10.40** a month in Arkansas, **$61.16** in Massachusetts

"Suitable home" rules, caseworkers judging mothers: **31** of 45 states, 1941

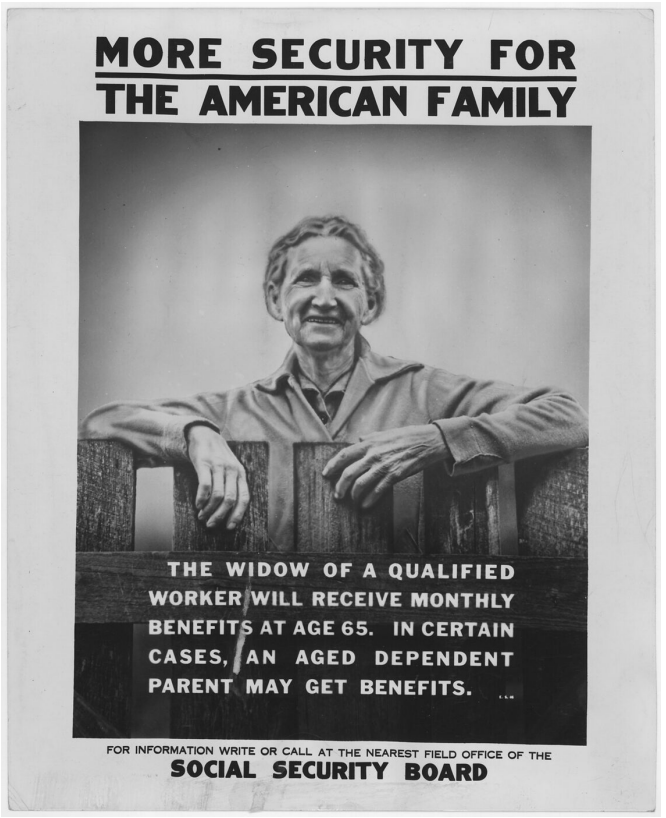
Georgia: a racial quota on who got aid

Mettler, ch. 6, table 6, p. 160; pp. 164–72

1939: who moved up, who stayed

- Widows of covered workers move up to Social Security
- ADC gets a means test ("inscribed with means testing")
- Black share of ADC families: **14–17%** in the late 1930s → **31%** in 1948

Mettler: 1939 "rescued mostly white, middle-class women"



Social Security Board poster · FDR Library, National Archives

Mettler, ch. 6, pp. 167–69

Mettler's conclusion

"it was their designs that propelled them toward their separate fates"

UI's design → the same rules nationwide

ADC's design → mothers as "vassals" of each state's politics

Mettler, ch. 6, p. 175

Mettler and Michener, side by side

	Mettler, 1935–1950	Michener, 2010–2020
Who gets sorted	women from men, and by race	by race, and by state
What does the sorting	how programs were designed, then run	a court ruling, state choices, waivers, appointees
How states got the power	written into the 1935 law: who qualifies, benefits, morals rules	opened by *Sebelius* in 2012; widened by waivers
Who is left to the states	women, nonwhite men	Black and Latino adults in the South
The author's explanation	"their designs"	politics undoes policy

Paper 5: the same mechanism twice, or two that only look alike? Mechanism = the way a policy ends up sorting people

Mettler, pp. 5, 23, 175 · Michener, pp. 547, 550–55

Paper 5: draft your position

With a partner, 6 minutes. Write down three things:

1. **Your position,** in one sentence: are Mettler and Michener describing the same mechanism, or two different ones?
2. **Your evidence:** one page number from Mettler and one from Michener.
3. **Your prediction:** if you're right, where should we see it next? Name a program.

Mechanism = the way a policy ends up sorting people · Paper 5 due Fri 11/20, 11:59 p.m.

Paper 5, and next week

Fri 11/20, 11:59 p.m.: about 600 words

Take a position · cite pages from both readings · say what it predicts

May use Howard ch. 9 and Gilens

11/23–27: Thanksgiving, no class

By 2:15 you should be able to say

How a program is designed and run shapes citizenship

National for white male earners; state-level for women, nonwhite men

Excluded: farm and domestic work

UI and ADC began alike; money and administration split them

ADC: low benefits, different in every state, mothers policed

Mettler and Michener: one mechanism or two?