The Politics of Determining Merit Aid Eligibility Criteria: An Analysis of the Policy Process

In the past decade and a half, the shift of state resources from need-based financial aid to merit-based aid has been remarkable. Georgia sparked this trend when, in 1993, its citizens passed a referendum to adopt a state lottery with proceeds earmarked for education programs, including the HOPE Scholarship program. Since then, fourteen states have adopted similar programs that provide college scholarships to students based most often on a combination of high school grade point averages and standardized test scores. The substantive result in these fourteen states is that non-need-based aid has increased from $349 million to $2.2 billion since 1994, while need-based aid has increased only slightly from $700 million to $800 million (Heller & Marin, 2004; NASSGAP, 2007).

Given the “negative social consequences” of this state financial aid trend, researchers have paid particular attention to the disproportionate eligibility rates for students traditionally under-represented in postsecondary education (Cornwell, Mustard, & Sridhar, 2006; Dee & Jackson, 1999; Dynarski, 2000, 2004; Heller & Marin, 2002, 2004; Ness & Tucker, 2008). Yet, despite the scholarly attention on the effects of merit aid on college access and choice, particularly on the significant effect that states’ varied eligibility criteria play (Heller, 2004; Ness & Noland,
2007; St. John & Chung, 2004), no studies have examined the policy process through which merit aid criteria are determined. This is surprising given the recent attention to state-level policy dynamics and decision making on other higher education issues such as statewide governance structures (deGive & Olswang, 1999; Leslie & Novak, 2003; Martinez, 2002; McLendon, 2003a; Mills, 2007; Trow, 1998).

In the vein of studies that rely on theoretical frameworks to explain complex decision making phenomena, such as Allison (1971), this study aims to extend the conceptual understanding of the merit aid criteria determination process. Thus, formally stated the two research questions guiding this study are: (1) How do states determine the initial eligibility criteria for merit aid programs? and (2) How will three theoretical frameworks—advocacy coalition, multiple streams, and electoral connection—explain the process by which states determine merit aid eligibility criteria?

Theoretical Framework

Higher education scholars have increasingly relied on the conceptual body of literature produced by political science and public policy scholars to explain policymaking phenomena (Leslie & Berdahl, 2008; Leslie & Novak, 2003; McLendon, 2003a; Mills, 2007). Indeed, among other frameworks, McLendon (2003b) specifically recommends to higher education researchers two conceptual frameworks applied in this study—advocacy coalition framework and multiple streams. The electoral connection of legislators to their constituents represents the final conceptual lens of consideration.

The advocacy coalition framework, as conceptualized by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993, 1999), contends that the policy process is chiefly characterized by coalitions of policy actors. These coalitions—stable over time and sharing common belief systems—consist of elected officials, governmental agency staff, interest group leaders, media representatives, and researchers. By extending the traditional “iron triangle” understanding of policymaking, the advocacy coalition framework not only recognizes that multiple coalitions may exist within a single policy subsystem, but also broadens coalition membership to policy actors not included in the elected official-agency staff-interest group triumvirate. Furthermore, this framework takes into account the role of forces that influence these coalitions, both the “stable parameters” and significant events in the broader system.

Recognizing that coalitions, no matter what their membership and how powerful, cannot influence policy decisions alone, Sabatier and
Jenkins-Smith (1993) identify common areas of stability and a series of events external to the policy subsystem that shape the policy process. The stable parameters incorporated in the advocacy coalition framework serve as an explicit reminder that each policy issue rests within a larger decision making arena. As an example, the basic governmental structure affects the extent to which policy issues can be influenced by legislative or judicial means (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith). In addition to these stable parameters, external events at the macro level, such as widespread changes in public opinion, may inevitably impact the policy subsystem of a given issue. Depending on the relevance of an external event and on the resources of a coalition, events and arrangements outside of a subsystem could be of paramount importance.

The foundation of advocacy coalitions is the belief systems that influence their policy preferences. Given the stability of coalitions, over a decade or more, these groups of policy actors not only share broad worldviews, which Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) refer to as the “deep (normative) core,” but also share more specific principles such as an orientation toward access, as opposed to excellence, in higher education (the “near (policy) core”) and “secondary aspects” of belief systems, which may include agreement on budgetary and administrative issues. Ultimately, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993, 1999) contend that policy change is most likely to occur if external events lead to a shift in coalitions’ belief systems. In addition, the presence of professionals associated with the policy issue and of quantifiable data further enhances the likelihood of policy change. Finally, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) indicate that “policy-oriented learning” occurs when a subsystem gains new information about the adoption and efficacy of similar policies in different policy environments.

The multiple streams conceptual framework characterizes the policy-making process as ambiguous and multifaceted. Cohen, March, and Olson (1972) first introduced this theory as a “garbage can model” of decision making at colleges and universities. More recently, Kingdon (1995) revised the model to explore and explain the “agenda-setting” and “alternative specification” phases of policymaking in the federal government and Zahariadas (2003) applied the framework to case studies of various international contexts. Moreover, in addition to the application of multiple streams in the political science literature, McLendon (2003a) returns multiple streams to the higher education sector and offers a revised model to describe the decentralization of state-level governance structures.

Three fluid streams—problems, policies, and politics—embody the foundation of multiple streams theory. The problem stream, unlike a lin-
ear approach to decision making, does not necessarily represent the first stage of the policymaking process, rather this stream simply consists of conditions that rise to the policy agenda and that can be construed as “problems” to be solved. The policy stream represents possible solutions, or policy alternatives, that can be generated by varying stakeholders, including elected officials and their staffs, interest groups, governmental agencies, and researchers. The politics stream, which according to Kingdon (1995) exerts the most influence, includes the myriad influences on the policy process that are unrelated to the specific problems and policies of interest. As these three streams flow through the policy process, occasionally a policy actor is able to “couple” an issue across multiple streams.

Policy adoption, according to multiple streams theory, is dependent upon on timing and the influence of a few policy actors. The coupling of problem, policy, and politics streams is nearly always serendipitous and fleeting. When such a “policy window” opens deft “policy entrepreneurs” use this opportunity to advance their pet solution or gain political support. Kingdon (1995) identifies qualities such as political connections, negotiating skill, and issue expertise as means through which policy entrepreneurs can “soften up” the system and, ultimately, push to garner support for their issue.

The final framework, electoral connection, provides an elegant conceptual perspective: the policy process can be explained simply by elected officials’ reelection interests. As opposed to James Madison’s argument in Federalist Paper Number 39 stating that federal legislators should “represent” their constituents interests, David Mayhew (2004) and Richard Fenno (1978) argue that elected officials behave more like “delegates” in their support of issues aligned closely with their constituents’ preferences. Indeed, Mayhew (2004) refers to legislators as “single-minded reelection seekers” and Fenno (1978) claims that elected officials “internalize constituents” in order to increase the legislators’ trustworthiness within their districts.

While Mayhew (2004) admits that his “electoral connection” was intended as an over-simplified caricature of constituent influence on the policy process, the significance of an elected official’s district may not be fully accounted for in the advocacy coalition and multiple streams frameworks. In fact, Fenno (1978) outlines four circles of influence on legislators’ voting and committee behavior, including the entire district, likely voters, core supporters, and personal friends. Depending on the policy issue, each of these circles of influence impact the elected official’s position and behavior. In addition to this catego-
rization of influence upon legislators, electoral connection also considers how legislators seek to gain support from their constituents.

To this end, Mayhew (2004) suggests that legislators employ three techniques to ensure reelection. First, advertising, which has remained ubiquitous among elected officials, necessitates the development of a brand-type appeal to constituencies that is rarely based on substantive issues. Second, credit claiming requires the elected official to take personal responsibility for governmental action or for other changes that are largely viewed as beneficial. As a result, constituents believe that their legislator will continue to “make pleasing things happen.” Third, position taking entails a public proclamation by an elected official on an issue that is likely to be of interest to a wider audience. Position taking is not limited to official positions in roll-call votes or floor speeches, but also includes taking positions in media interviews or during non-legislative speeches on “hot button” issues that rarely arise in earnest to the policymaking process, such as abortion or gun control.

Methods

Given this study’s aim to understand and explain complex processes and phenomena in a bounded system, rather than to predict or to test causality, I utilize a comparative case study method. As opposed to single case studies, the multiple case study research design allows for analytic replication within and between cases and thereby produces more robust conclusions (Yin, 2003). Furthermore, since governmental and organizational context represent a crucial aspect of this study’s analysis, the comparative case study design captures these contextual similarities and differences among the three cases.

To select sample state merit aid programs, I employ Yin’s (2003) “replication logic” and apply five selection criteria. First, the state merit aid program must be broad-based in that more than 10% of the statewide graduating high school class is eligible for the merit scholarship. Second, the state’s merit scholarships must be renewable, based on academic performance, for multiple years. Third, funding for the merit aid program must come from a new source of revenue, such as a state lottery or tobacco lawsuit settlement. Fourth, the sample states must have substantively different eligibility criteria. Fifth, the first broad-based merit scholarship program—Georgia’s HOPE Scholarship program—will not be considered. The dynamics of this initial policy adoption will likely differ greatly from those that followed, especially since Georgia’s program influenced each of the 13 subsequent merit aid
programs. Of the 14 state merit aid programs, three state programs meet these five criteria—New Mexico, Tennessee, and West Virginia.

The data collected in all three states include archival documents and interviews with key policy actors. Indeed, the bulk of evidence comes from interviews with 56 participants across five categories of involvement as outlined in Table 1.

I conducted interviews during site visits to each of the states in 2005 with the exception of 11 telephone interviews. While remaining fluid enough to capture emerging themes, the interviews followed a semi-structured protocol of seven open-ended questions, with relevant probes, which I crafted based on the three conceptual frameworks of interest to this study (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Interviews averaged approximately 50 minutes with a range from 20 minutes to two and a half hours. All participants agreed to have the interview audio-recorded and most chose to protect their confidentiality through the use of pseudonym. In addition to having the interviews fully transcribed, I collected extensive field notes during the in-person interviews.

Analysis of both interview and archival data followed both inductive and deductive strategies. To deduce themes from the data collected in each state, I employed the pattern matching technique (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I also utilized an analytical framework, which consists of operationalized elements of the three theoretical frameworks discussed in the previous section, as an inductive approach to consider how the conceptual lenses explain phenomena of the policy process in all three states. The six dimensions of the analytic framework are: (1) rationality of policy actors’ behaviors and preferences, (2) clarity of program goals, (3) stability of policy coalitions over time, (4) influence of elected officials versus non-elected policy actors, (5) availability of technical information, and (6) effect of external influences. Using this framework, I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distribution of Interview Participants</th>
<th>New Mexico</th>
<th>Tennessee</th>
<th>West Virginia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Governors and staff</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislators and staff</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus/System officials</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State agency officials</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers and observers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
coded interview transcripts and archival documents with the ultimate aim of determining the explanatory power of each theoretical framework.

These efforts to triangulate data enhance the reliability and validity of this study. Since the policy episodes in two states occurred years prior to my interviews with policy actors, Yin (2003) suggests that due to “recall error” informants’ recollections of events likely included “rationalizations and reconstruction.” To guard against this limitation, my review of archival documents and artifacts, including legislative bills, legislative committee meeting minutes, transcribed legislative hearings and testimony, governmental policy reports, correspondence from legislators, state agency officials, and campus leaders, scholarly publications, and local and national newspaper articles, corroborated (or contradicted) interview data and established a chronological sequence of events in each state’s criteria determination process. As King, Keohane, and Verba (1994) note, “descriptive inference” materializes as such analysis of observable facts collected by utilizing systematic and scientifically-tested procedures.

Case Narratives

Distilled from more comprehensive consideration of this comparative case study (Ness, 2008), the following three case narratives summarize the merit aid criteria determination policy episodes in New Mexico, West Virginia, and Tennessee. Presented in chronological order of scholarship program adoption, these narratives incorporate extensive archival and interview data to track the policy process through which initial eligibility criteria were determined.

New Mexico Lottery Success Scholarship Program

In 1996, four years after Georgia citizens voted to enact a state lottery with proceeds to fund the HOPE Scholarship program, New Mexico became the second state to adopt a lottery-funded merit scholarship program and the thirty-eighth state to adopt a lottery. A decade prior only one-half the number of state lotteries (19) existed. Indeed, since the mid-1980s, state-sponsored gambling had become a hot-button issue both in New Mexico and nationally. This debate was not limited to lotteries, especially in New Mexico, where Native American communities advocated for the right to operate casinos on their federally-protected reservations. In the few years leading up to the ultimate 1996 lottery adoption, interview participants indicated a concern that New Mexico would “become another Las Vegas”; however, one respondent drew a
distinction between scratch-off lottery tickets and “putting forty [dollars] on red.” Yet, despite these concerns New Mexican voters passed a referendum in support of both a state lottery and casino gaming on Native American land. Although this referendum was eventually ruled invalid by state courts due to its use of a “double-barreled” question that also included video gambling, state support for gambling was evident (Peterson, 1994). In the same 1994 election, Gary Johnson won the gubernatorial race based, in part, on his support for both gambling initiatives. Despite the clear support for a state lottery from the governor and the public, the process of determining the beneficiary programs made for a contentious 1995 legislative session.

*The direct influence of Senator Michael Sanchez.* Freshmen legislators rarely sponsor landmark legislation, so when Senator Michael Sanchez introduced Senate Bill 1064, which would authorize full-tuition scholarships at New Mexico colleges and universities, the higher education community and fellow legislators paid little attention. This was understandable given the tenuous support for the higher-profile parallel legislation on the implementation of the lottery. As a result, Senator Sanchez relied on his own resources and inclinations to craft the proposed eligibility criteria for what would become the Lottery Success Scholarship program.

As opposed to deliberations with legislative colleagues or reports prepared by policy analysts, Senator Sanchez relied on his personal experience and recalled a conversation with his wife about what incentives might have influenced their high school classmates to attend college. Ultimately, they resolved that “future generations of New Mexicans [would] never have that excuse to say, ‘we didn’t have the ability to go to college because we didn’t have the funds.’” Using this rationale, Senator Sanchez and his wife decided that eligibility should be based on college-level performance as opposed to the high school grade point average criteria for the Georgia HOPE program. The couple settled on a 2.5 GPA requirement “as an average grade that people should be able to make.” As his bill navigated the legislative process, Senator Sanchez reiterated this rationale for the eligibility criteria and, despite efforts to consider need-based criteria, was unwavering in his support for a scholarship that all New Mexican students had the opportunity to earn.

The Commission for Higher Education (CHE) was at the forefront of support for need-based elements of the scholarship criteria. Due to the stability and effectiveness that Dr. Bruce Hamlett brought to CHE as executive director, the coordinating agency served as a strong representative of the higher education community and advocated for alternative eligibility criteria, particularly an income cap. Given the widely held goal
in New Mexico of increasing access to postsecondary education, many legislators supported this means-testing provision. However, according to a senior staff member of CHE, these legislators did not have the political power to implement this change and, furthermore, there was little interest in determining the optimal eligibility criteria since the main focus “was just about getting the lottery through.”

In addition to the overwhelming legislative interest in the lottery bill rather than the scholarship bill, Senator Sanchez recalled that higher education leaders and legislators alike did not think that either bill would ultimately pass. A cabinet secretary in Governor Gary Johnson’s administration indicated one vital association for the lottery bill to pass—linkage to a “high public purpose.” Policymakers determined that the Lottery Success Scholarship program would win the votes of legislators who would otherwise not support a gambling initiative. Recognizing that the program details were not as important as the program itself, the information provided by the higher education community had little influence on Senator Sanchez who conceded that while CHE “gave us some statistics. It wasn’t a major role.” A CHE senior official agreed with Senator Sanchez’s characterization of CHE influence on the criteria determination process and when asked whether this process was a good lesson in public policy, replied:

No, because even the efforts the Commission made, which were rather strong efforts to make it need-based, all of it, they were soundly killed. I mean, the legislative sponsor wanted it to be merit-based. He drove everything. He had to be checked with on every component of those guidelines, down to the name.

*The final push for Success.* With only two weeks left in the 1995 legislative session, which is limited by statute to 60 days, House Speaker Raymond Sanchez, Senator Michael Sanchez’s brother, commented to a local reporter that “the lottery was not a big priority” (Gallagher, 1995). Meanwhile the Senate nearly unanimously passed legislation to implement the lottery and allocate all its proceeds to the Lottery Success Scholarship program. With an impasse between the chambers looming, the Sanchez brothers sought a compromise with the House. One respondent suggested that education concerns in the House tend to be tilted in favor of K–12 education since many of the elected officials in that body were formerly or are currently employed as teachers or principals. Given this support for primary and secondary education in the House and given that Governor Johnson’s election hinged on his pledge to repeal taxes thereby limiting the possibility of increased revenue for the state’s general fund, the House ultimately allocated 60% of lottery revenue to capital school
outlay. Senator Sanchez viewed this solution as a disappointment; however, the House Speaker Sanchez recalled that this compromise “was the only way we could get the votes in the House to move it out of committee, out of Appropriations.” Once the lottery bill passed the House, only the Governor’s signature remained to establish the New Mexico Lottery.

The indirect influence of Governor Gary Johnson. Although Governor Johnson rarely concerned himself with higher education issues, his impact on the lottery scholarship program rested on his support of state-sponsored gambling and of linking these proceeds to education. On the issue of eligibility criteria, Governor Johnson expressed his preference for a more rigorous GPA requirement, but recalled “it wasn’t anything I saw as a deal breaker.” In fact, based on reports from other states’ experience with newly-adopted lotteries, Governor Johnson insisted on a “trap-proof” allocation of lottery revenue to be explicitly marked for education programs to ensure that these proceeds would not revert to the general fund. However, according to one of his cabinet secretaries, Governor Johnson’s public “distain” for the legislature created “lots of tension.” Indeed, many respondents indicated that the Governor’s iconoclastic nature and his entrepreneurial success despite being “a college drop out” made him an unlikely advocate for higher education. Based on the Governor’s uncompromising reputation, legislators and higher education leaders rarely consulted his administration on policy issues. Yet, Governor Johnson speculated that one of his formal powers as governor may have influenced the New Mexico policy episode.

I don’t know if you realize this or not, but I vetoed 750 bills while I was Governor of New Mexico. So, putting that into perspective, that’s like more bills [vetoed] than all of the governors in the country combined. So, when I said that I would veto legislation that screwed with it, they took me to heart, I think.

West Virginia PROMISE Scholarship Program

The criteria determination process of the West Virginia PROMISE program unfolded over the course of three years, 1999–2001. The leadership and influence of two policy actors guided PROMISE legislation and policy first by authorizing the program, then by attaching a funding source to the scholarships, and finally by negotiating a compromise between the legislative and executive branches of government. Despite unified Democratic Party control of both legislative houses and the governor’s office, the adoption of the merit aid in West Virginia was a fiercely contentious political process and, as such, was influenced by formal powers and organizational structures and by individual strategies and tactics to gain support for PROMISE.
Senator Lloyd Jackson leads the authorization of PROMISE. As Chair of the Senate Education Committee and by virtue of his leadership roles in national policy organizations such as the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) and the Education Commission of the States (ECS), Senator Jackson earned the reputation among fellow Senators not only of an education policy expert, but also of a “humble man of integrity.” Not surprisingly, then, the Senate passed his PROMISE Scholarship bill only weeks after Senator Jackson introduced the bill. According to House Speaker Bob Kiss, however, House members were “a little more leery and a little more uncomfortable about the fiscal ramifications.” To assuage these reservations in the House, leaders of both legislative chambers arranged a “horse trade,” which according to Senator Jackson “wasn’t particularly contentious.”

That’s the way the game works. People understood that. So, I don’t think there was any opposition to the legislation. I just think they knew we wanted this bill, and we knew what they wanted. . . . They wanted Eastern Community College in [West Virginia House] Delegate Michael’s district. . . . And so both those bills kind of languished in both houses until they both passed.

Throughout the legislative process to authorize PROMISE, consideration of the scholarships’ eligibility criteria rarely occurred. Before the compromise with the House, the House Education Committee countered that additional financial aid funding should be directed to the state’s need-based program instead of the proposed merit-based PROMISE program. At least part of the reason that the House lacked widespread support for this need-based aid priority was Senator Jackson’s command of financial aid trends and reliance on policy experts primarily at SREB. For example, based on anecdotal evidence that Georgia’s HOPE Scholarship criteria, a B average, led to high school grade inflation, the SREB advised Senator Jackson to include additional objective criteria, such as standardized test scores. As a result, on April 7, 1999, Governor Cecil Underwood signed Senate Bill 431, which authorized but did not fund the PROMISE Scholarship program, and which included Senator Jackson’s preferred eligibility criteria of a B average and “additional objective standards as the board considers necessary to promote academic excellence and to maintain the financial stability of the fund.”

Governor Bob Wise finds funding source for PROMISE. In the decade preceding the 2000 gubernatorial election, concern among West Virginians intensified with regard to “gray machines”—video devices that if operated solely for entertainment purposes were legal, but illegal with stakes attached as was the norm. Despite public discontent with the proliferation of gray machines, especially in family-friendly establishments
such as ice cream and pizza parlors, few elected officials were willing to support state intervention either to make these machines illegal, which would be met with resistance from the retail operators in their districts who earned revenue from these machines, or to legalize and regulate the machines, which would undoubtedly meet resistance from constituents who opposed state-sanctioned gambling. Bob Wise, the Democratic candidate in the 2000 Governor’s race, staked his election on his support for “regulating, restricting, and reducing” the gray machines and directing their proceeds to fund the PROMISE Scholarship program.

Respondents noted that Bob Wise may have been attracted to this issue both on its merits and on its predicted political popularity. One campus president noted that during Bob Wise’s tenure as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, the congressman paid close attention to education issues, especially student financial aid. However, according to one legislator, gubernatorial candidate Wise supported funding the PROMISE program “more for political reasons because he thought it was the ticket to bigger and greater things.” The legislator also noted that Bob Wise hired the former political consultant to then-candidate for governor of Georgia Zell Miller. Governor Miller won a close election in 1992, which is largely attributed to his support for the adoption of the Georgia lottery with proceeds earmarked for education programs, including HOPE Scholarships. According to this legislator, the consultant identified full-funding of the PROMISE program as “the key to getting re-elected.”

_The campaign for PROMISE continues._ Even after handedly winning the governor’s race, Bob Wise knew that funding the PROMISE program would not come easy.

The first step is getting elected but the second step was getting PROMISE past the legislature, and I knew that if I stayed in Charleston and worked with 134 members of the legislature, many of whom some supported it and some didn’t, that I probably would not get it passed. And so that is why I had to go—I had another campaign to run as soon as I came in office, and that was to go back out on the stump and press for the PROMISE.

With stump speeches, grassroots involvement, and press conferences, indeed, the second campaign for PROMISE looked much like the first. While Governor Wise continued to “press for the PROMISE,” key members of his administration worked the “inside game” in negotiating with legislators. The largest hurdle, however, remained: garnering political support to legalize the gray machines.

As evidence of the challenges facing PROMISE’s funding source, Governor Wise recalled the odd alliance that formed in West Virginia to oppose gray machine regulation:
I still remember the day that we had a couple of busloads of church folk show up to protest, but it came out that the buses were paid for by the gamblers back in their district because for the first time the gamblers were now going to be taxed. . . . The Baptists and the bootleggers go to the polls together because the Baptists don’t want liquor by the drink and the bootleggers don’t either because that takes away their revenue. Well, it’s the same thing here.

Indeed, many Democratic and Republican legislators represented districts with strong anti-gambling convictions. In response, rather than use a “stick” response of aggressively prosecuting the estimated 20,000 to 30,000 illegal gray machines, Governor Wise offered a “carrot” incentive to reduce the number of machines by regulating the industry and attaching its revenue to college scholarships. One private college president referred to this as “transforming sin money . . . into [a] good public outcome.” And, a Republican Senator, who supported funding need-based aid as opposed to the PROMISE program, acknowledged the efficacy of Governor Wise’s strategy:

No one can be against merit-based scholarships. No one can be against—I mean, once PROMISE passed there was no one against it because it was a powerful political tool. I mean, Bob Wise saw that. Who’s going to be against providing college education to A / B students of middle-class families? I mean, no one’s against that.

Despite efforts in the House to reduce the eligibility criteria (“Proposed rules,” 2001, April 2), which were subsequently reinstated days later by House and Senate leaders (Seiler, 2001, April 5), debate over the eligibility criteria paled in comparison to the wrangling between the legislative and executive branches. Based on the constitutionally strong powers of the West Virginia governor, which include line-item veto, Bob Wise threatened, “No PROMISE, no budget.” House Speaker Bob Kiss responded through the press that “the governor proposes, the legislature disposes. We are not a rubber stamp” (Frankel, 2001, April 4). The strife between branches continued in the final weeks of the legislative session and in an extended session called by Governor Wise. Senator Lloyd Jackson offered the following explanation for the ultimate compromise reached by the governor and the legislature:

When a governor [places all his support behind one issue], he does other things. It’s not illegal things, but things—you’d been wanting a water line somewhere for a long time and you can’t get it done. Then you could negotiate and find out that the governor all of a sudden has the same interest in a water line that you do if he could get the money to do it . . .

And that’s the other reason why we spread this money around, put some in the seniors, and all of that is to build constituency to get the thing passed.
And it took all of that. It took all of that and more. There was a lot of arm-twisting on the part of a lot of people. One Republican voted for it, only one. Republican Senator Karen Facemyer cast the deciding vote and explained it as the “next best step, which is to regulate and restrict” (Kabler, 2001, April 14). Governor Wise and senior officials in his administration widely recognized Senator Facemyer for her courageous vote; furthermore, they relished that the well-honed message of “regulate, restrict, and reduce” appeared to be her rationale for supporting gray machine legalization.

Three months after Governor Wise signed HB 3238 into law the PROMISE Board of Control, the oversight agency established to administer the scholarships and to determine the eligibility criteria, approved the PROMISE Scholarship program rules and regulations including the eligibility criteria: 3.0 grade point average and 21 ACT score. Respondents participating in the PROMISE Board deliberations indicated that the national ACT average score (20.8) and West Virginia average score (20.3) served as the rationale for the required ACT score of 21. However, Senator Jackson recalled that the politics of enactment may have mattered most, “They backed into it because they knew they had $27 million. They’ll tell you what they want to, but I know that’s what they did.”

Tennessee HOPE Scholarship Program

In November 2002, Tennesseans overwhelmingly approved a referendum that would alter the state constitution to allow for a state lottery with proceeds earmarked for college scholarships. Although eight states in addition to New Mexico and West Virginia had adopted merit-based scholarship programs in the ten years prior to this referendum, policymakers in Tennessee looked primarily to Georgia’s initial program and even adopted the same program name—HOPE. However, support for a Tennessee lottery even pre-dated Georgia’s HOPE program. Senator Steve Cohen first introduced lottery legislation in 1984 during his first term. Nearly two decades later, Senator Cohen’s lottery initiative finally gained political support, both within the General Assembly and among the Tennessee citizenry, once he tied the lottery revenue to popular merit-based scholarships. With the always contentious gambling issue settled and with Georgia’s HOPE program identified as a baseline model, the policy process to determine Tennessee HOPE scholarship eligibility criteria began.

Deliberations of the Education Lottery Task Force. Almost immediately upon the referendum’s passage, leaders in the House and Senate appointed elected officials and higher education leaders to the newly
established Education Lottery Task Force (ELTF). To meet its charge of providing the General Assembly with a policy recommendation, the ELTF deliberated over the next four months on how to allocate lottery revenue and how to craft scholarship criteria. As a first step, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), whose executive director served as ELTF chair, provided background information on the dozen other state merit aid programs and invited national experts to present research findings and to offer policy suggestions for the Tennessee program. For example, based on research reported in Don Heller’s then-recently published *Who Should We Help? The Negative Social Consequences of Merit Aid* (Heller & Marin, 2002) that highlighted the disproportionately lower eligibility rates for students under-represented in higher education, Heller advocated for scholarship provisions that would increase college access, such as means-tested awards and widely attainable eligibility criteria. Over the next few months the ELTF considered scores of scholarship criteria alternatives, all of which included an income cap of $100,000 and followed a tiered approach with GPA and ACT score criteria for a base scholarship and two supplemental awards for students of high need and high merit. In the last week of the ELTF deliberations, however, the elected officials exerted their power over the proceedings and after a heated debate voted to remove the income caps. The THEC executive director and ELTF chair applied the following analogy to this process:

The recommendation that came out of the task force into the General Assembly, you know, it was kind of like we had built this homecoming float and had it just the way we wanted to with all the crepe paper and stuff like that, and then the thugs showed up with baseball bats. The float that came out of the process didn’t quite look the way we had built it.

Criteria consideration in the legislative arena: Direct lobbying and sponsor leadership. When the ELTF recommendation reached the General Assembly, the House and Senate sponsors of the scholarship bill applied quite different strategies to advocate its adoption. Based on his fiery disposition and unpredictability, sponsoring Senator Steve Cohen, whom nearly all respondents identified as the “father” of the lottery scholarship program, served simultaneously as the chief advocate for and impediment to all lottery legislation. By contrast, the House sponsor, Representative Chris Newton, provided an unexpected source of leadership, as a governing board official elaborated upon:

Chris, as far as I know, had not handled any major legislation of that caliber since he had been to the General Assembly. He made himself completely open and available to the press, and they loved it. He would give you the sort of down-home snippets that they ate up, so he had this sort of character about
him that made him viable, plus he bobbed and weaved pretty good. Where Cohen would say, “This is where I am; this is where you need to be,” [Newton] was playing both sides. I think Newton was probably talking to House leadership, talking to House Republicans, and talking to Cohen, and so you couldn’t actually get him pinned down.

The distinction of leadership styles was, perhaps, most evident on the issue of scholarship amounts for students attending private colleges and universities.

From the initial deliberations of the ELTF through the 2003 legislative session, policymakers and higher education officials debated whether students attending private institutions should receive scholarships equal to those of students attending public colleges and universities. According to one state higher education leader, Senator Steve Cohen balked at the initial staff recommendation to provide equal awards and launched into a diatribe that the state leader recalled, “screw the independent institutions. They didn’t support me on the passage of the lottery. Why should they get anything now? They can jump up and down all they want, but they should be happy with anything that I give them.” In contrast to Senator Cohen’s personal reaction to this issue, Representative Newton anticipated his constituents’ interests and recalled, “I fought pretty hard on getting the privates on parity,” primarily because three private institutions were “sitting there in [my] backyard.” Yet, despite Representative Newton’s and widespread Republican support, the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association (TICUA) almost conceded to reduced award amounts for their students since Senator Cohen’s Democratic Party controlled both legislative chambers.

At the TICUA annual meeting, however, a private college president’s “damn the torpedoes” speech prompted the organization to enter the political fray. Using lobbying techniques rarely employed by colleges and universities, TICUA organized a month-long series of visits to the State Capitol by students from various private institutions. The TICUA president recalled that this strategy began to irk some legislators:

In the middle of having students visit legislators and which really offended some legislators—I had some actually call me and say, ‘Don’t you let your students, don’t you send them to my office ever again.’ And my response back to that was, ‘They’re your constituents. Are you saying you don’t want to talk to your constituents?’ It’s like we’re playing some game here, and then they backed down and it got real ugly.

At the same time, private college presidents, their board members, and the TICUA president lobbied their local legislators and the governor. With legislators largely divided on the issue, efforts to influence Governor Phil Bredesen’s administration intensified until ultimately
after a meeting about an unrelated topic at Vanderbilt University Governor Bredesen took questions from the press and responded that he was in favor of the money following the student (Youngman, 2003). The following morning, the TICUA president recalled one Senator proclaiming, “It’s over. The Governor is in favor of equal scholarships going to students, and so that’s what we’re going to do.”

The criteria compromise: A change of conjunction. Having settled the public-private scholarship award amounts and eliminated the income cap, the final criteria decision concerned the required grade point average and standardized test score. At legislators’ requests, THEC staff produced more than one-hundred scholarship criteria projections, which ranged from full-tuition level award amounts with higher GPA and ACT requirements to award amounts equal to roughly one-half the cost of tuition with lower criteria requirements. Throughout the process, as Chair of the Black Caucus and of the Higher Education sub-committee, Representative Tommie Brown requested information on the estimated eligibility rates of African American and low-income students. In fact, College Board experts provided testimony that disaggregated eligibility rates by county thereby providing legislators clear information on how their constituents would fare under various scholarship criteria scenarios. Based on this information most members of the Black Caucus supported a GPA requirement of 2.5 or 2.75 with no standardized test requirement rather than the criteria of a 3.0 GPA and 19 ACT score outlined in HB 787.

After a series of heated debates in legislative hearings, in caucus meetings, and in the press, according to the Black Caucus Chair, the House Speaker and Majority Leader approached the Caucus with a simple solution—change “and” to “or.” This change in conjunction would increase the estimated proportion of African American scholarship recipients from 6.5% of all scholarship recipients to 12%. So, after much more internal deliberation, the Black Caucus agreed to support the “and” to “or” amendment. However, support of the Black Caucus did not guarantee passage. Other respondents suggested that House leaders had ulterior motives.

Senator Cohen suspected that House leaders advanced the criteria compromise precisely because they thought that the “or” criteria would never pass in the Senate. The Senate sponsor recalled having an “epiphany” about the House leaders’ “do nothing” strategy after scanning early editions of newspapers and decided that his only option was to persuade the Senate to concur with the House bill. To do so, Senator Cohen, with the help of House sponsor Chris Newton, sought the support of Republicans by convincing them that House leaders would
place the blame squarely on Senate Republicans if no lottery scholarship bill passed. Ultimately, a series of political compromises appears to have influenced the Senate to concur with HB 787 by a vote of 27-3-1 and thereby adopt a merit-based scholarship program with the most widely attainable eligibility criteria among the dozen similar state programs.

Conceptual Findings

Based on the descriptive evidence provided in the three case narratives, conceptual findings emerge by considering three theoretical frameworks: advocacy coalition, multiple streams, and electoral connection. While each framework provides some explanatory power in one or more of the policy episodes, the multiple streams framework offered the greatest conceptual insight. Indeed, evidence of core components of the multiple streams framework exists in all three cases, including (1) the coupling of problems, policies, and politics, (2) the presence and influence of policy entrepreneurs, and (3) the unpredictable emergence of policy windows. Although the multiple streams framework provides the greatest explanatory power, elements of the other frameworks contribute to the conceptual understanding of this issue.

Although the advocacy coalition framework contributes to the conceptual understanding of the politics of merit aid criteria determination in three substantive ways, this comparative case study does not find compelling evidence to support an overall advocacy coalition model. The first significant contribution of advocacy coalition is the importance of “stable parameters,” such as basic governmental and organizational structures, which identifies broader influences on the policy process than does the multiple streams framework. Second, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999, p. 124) emphasize the role of “significant perturbations external to the subsystem,” such as electoral turnover and public opinion. While the multiple streams framework accounts for some of these influences in the politics stream, evidence from this comparative case study suggest that the broader advocacy coalition approach is more consistent, especially with regard to inter-state financial aid trends. In fact, the third, and perhaps most significant, contribution of advocacy coalition is the role of “policy-oriented learning.” Specific examples of these three contributions follow, but first consider a few reasons why the advocacy coalition framework lacks comprehensive explanatory power. Its primary limitation is the lack of evidence to support the existence of multiple policy coalitions, with competing belief systems, in existence for decades at a time. Instead, interview and archival data collected in all
three states suggest that intensely involved individual policy actors had a much greater influence on the policy process than did even a single coalition. Moreover, the involvement of policy actors within the higher education community appears to be more fluid than stable. In New Mexico and Tennessee, for example, the state coordinating boards played a much more active role than their organizations might have in the recent past. Bruce Hamlett brought stability and leadership to the CHE in New Mexico; and the THEC executive director played an especially active role given his concurrent service as chair of the ELTF. According to the advocacy coalition framework, these individuals and organizations would have been actively involved in the subsystem for a decade or longer. This was not the case.

Likewise, the electoral connection framework, while not offering a comprehensive model, contributes to the conceptual understanding of the politics of criteria determination. Case study evidence illustrates that the electoral connection framework clearly informs the understanding of how legislators came to support certain criteria—reelection interests. In all three policy episodes, elected officials cite the role of constituent preferences: Tennessee State Representative Newton supported equal awards for students attending private and public institutions because of the private colleges in his district; West Virginia Governor Bob Wise extended his campaign for PROMISE even after his election based on widespread public support; and, New Mexico State Senator Sanchez retrospectively reflected on what criteria might influence students in his hometown. However, the electoral connection framework does not sufficiently explain the merit aid criteria determination process. In particular, this framework does not account for the role of non-elected officials or for the relevant trends related to policy issues. In Tennessee, the higher education coordinating board played an active role in providing cost and eligibility forecasts and in distilling similar merit aid policy in other states. The West Virginia policy episode, as another counter-example, included Democratic legislators opposing PROMISE funding, against their constituents’ preferences, based on intra-state politics between the legislative and executive branches. It is for this reason that Governor Wise left the “inside game” to his aides while he went back on the stump for PROMISE. If the electoral connection framework held, then legislators’ support for PROMISE would be tightly coupled with their districts’ preference for the new merit aid program. Therefore, notwithstanding the conceptual contributions of advocacy coalition and electoral connection, it seems that a revised multiple streams model would best explain the merit aid criteria determination process in New Mexico, West Virginia, and Tennessee.
The “Revised Multiple Streams Model of Scholarship Criteria Determination” (Ness, 2008), depicted in Figure 1 above, extends Kingdon’s (1995) “revised garbage can” theory to include organizational structures and policy trends both within the state and external to the state, which is also consistent with the advocacy coalition framework elements of stable parameters and external events. The outer shell of the Revised Multiple Streams model also builds upon McLendon’s (2003a) “Policy Streams Model of Decentralization Agenda Setting,” which was the first multiple streams model to account for “contextual conditions” arising at the national, regional, and state levels. In Figure 1, the policy milieu accounts for organizational structures and characteristics of the state government and state higher education system, such as professionalism of the state legislature, strength of governor’s powers, and level of campus autonomy. In the West Virginia case, for example, the formal executive budgetary and veto powers provided Governor Bob Wise the formal authority to threaten “no PROMISE, no budget.”

The policy field represents a substantive revision of multiple streams frameworks by broadening the policy (or solution) stream from one of three streams to the field within which the politics and problem streams flow. This modification actually seems more consistent with Kingdon’s (1995) conceptualization of the “alternative specification” process as opposed to the “agenda setting” process, since policies or solutions are the subject of consideration. Indeed, Kingdon suggests that during the alternative specification phase all three streams must couple, since policies are the focal point. Similarly, in this Revised Multiple Streams
model instead of two of the three streams coupling, the politics and problem streams must connect in support of a preferred solution. In this sense, the policy field incorporates elements of the advocacy coalition framework, such as the impact of policy information from sources within and outside the state. Rather than one of three factors that explain policy formulation, the policy field more accurately represents the environment in which policy decisions are made. As mentioned earlier, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) contend that “policy-oriented learning” occurs when subsystems learn from other policy decisions. Similarly, the diffusion of policy innovations framework (Berry & Berry, 2007) suggests that policies migrate across states in their region or nationally. Thus, the policy field seems to better represent the three policy episodes of merit aid criteria determination. The Tennessee and West Virginia cases provide evidence that information about other state merit aid programs introduced by outside experts directly influenced the criteria determination process. Furthermore, even in New Mexico, which did not directly base its merit aid criteria on the only other state program, information on the Georgia HOPE program still entered the policy field and was advanced by state higher education officials.

Again, within the policy field flow the politics and problem streams both of which are closely aligned to the multiple streams models outlined by Kingdon (1995) and Zahariadis (2003). The politics stream captures (a) constituent preferences, such as those represented by Black Caucus members in Tennessee, (b) gubernatorial turnover, which played an important role in both New Mexico and West Virginia, (c) interest group activity, such as exercised by Tennessee private colleges in support of equal scholarship awards for their students, and (d) partisanship, which influenced the passage of PROMISE in West Virginia since the Democratic Party controlled both legislative chambers and the governor’s office. In each policy episode, one or more of these elements, which do not represent an exhaustive list, coupled with an indicator or event in the problems stream. In New Mexico, for instance, policymakers reported that a merit-based scholarship program represented a “high public purpose,” which was necessary to earn widespread support for a state-sponsored lottery.

Policy entrepreneurs, using a combination of political connections, negotiating skills, and persistence (Kingdon, 1995), advance their preferred policy solution by coupling the politics and problem streams. This element is intentionally situated in center of Figure 1 to represent the crucial role that these policy actors play in connecting elements within the politics and problems streams. Indeed, without these individuals’ efforts to couple two streams (within the policy field of related trends and
information), the policy process remains in abeyance. In each of the three policy episodes, it is nearly impossible to separate the ultimate eligibility criteria from the policy entrepreneur. State Senators Michael Sanchez and Steve Cohen wielded tremendous power in crafting the scholarship criteria for merit aid programs respectively in New Mexico and Tennessee. In West Virginia, Governor Bob Wise influenced the criteria both directly by endorsing a GPA and standardized test requirement and indirectly by negotiating allocations from projected video lottery revenue and thereby determining the share of revenue for PROMISE.

Finally, the policy window represents an ephemeral opening during which the “black box” influences of political manipulation and deal-brokering along with the consideration of issue-specific information are weighed and deliberated until ultimately reaching a final policy decision. These “serendipitous” windows of opportunity are unpredictable based on external events (captured by the policy milieu and policy field) and intra-state politics and problems. Yet, when a policy window opens non-elected issue experts often exert a stabilizing influence, such as in Tennessee and West Virginia when THEC staff and SREB officials, respectively, provided technical information on the projected impact of scholarship criteria on eligibility rates and program costs. Notwithstanding these rational influences of policy experts and as the electoral connection framework suggests, within these policy windows elected officials employ tactics of “credit claiming” and “position taking” to increase support among their constituents. In Tennessee, for example, legislative members of the Black Caucus opposed the use of standardized tests based on testimony from College Board representatives that illustrated the projected low eligibility rates of students in their districts.

Discussion and Implications

Building on contemporary theoretical frameworks borrowed from the political science literature, the conceptual findings of this study contribute to the understanding of the higher education policymaking process. In particular, this examination of the politics of merit aid criteria determination has relevance for both practical policy and theoretical research consideration. While only the Tennessee policy episode entailed an explicit deliberation over the merit aid criteria, both the New Mexico and West Virginia cases detail the many political influences on criteria determination, especially since in both these cases the scholarship criteria and revenue source were considered concurrently in the same policy process. So, although the New Mexico Lottery Success
Scholarship eligibility criteria were established solely by Senator Sanchez, the criteria determination process also included the context and debate surrounding the adoption of a statewide lottery and implementation of a merit scholarship program. In this way, the “politics” of merit aid criteria determination matter at least as much as the alternative policy proposals for eligibility criteria. This specific example highlights the conceptual importance of two aspects central to the Revised Multiple Streams model: policy entrepreneurs and policy windows.

The roles of individual policy actors and of serendipitous timing can hardly be under-stated in these three policy episodes. Consistent with many other studies that account for the influence of policy entrepreneurs (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993, 2002; Kingdon, 1995; Mintrom, 1997, 2000), these individuals exert enormous influence and spend valuable political capital to advance their preferred policy solutions. Of course, the success of these efforts depends on the timing being right. As Kingdon (1995) and Zahariadis (2003) suggest, ambiguity plagues the policy process. When a policy window opens, however, political strategies, tactics, and maneuvers dominate the process. The conceptual and descriptive understanding of these aspects would benefit from studies that more deeply identify and perhaps categorize the various roles and tactics of policy entrepreneurs similar to Riker’s (1986) classic study on “political manipulation.” As such, future studies might consider the relevance of policy entrepreneurs specifically and of the Revised Multiple Streams model more broadly to additional merit aid policy episodes or to other higher education policy issues. Furthermore, this model might be tested alongside other theories of the public policy process.

Indeed, this study’s conceptual findings suggest that at least two other conceptual frameworks borrowed from the political science literature, and specifically recommended by McLendon (2003b), might add complementary or competing explanatory power to the politics of merit aid criteria determination. First, the punctuated equilibrium framework advanced by Baumgartner and Jones (1993, 2002) might add clarity to the process through which merit aid programs gain adoption. Briefly stated, this framework holds that long periods of a stable policy issue (such as the allocation of state financial aid on the basis of student need) are interrupted by “punctuations” of policy change (such as the adoption of merit-based scholarship program). These punctuations become possible due to the creation of new “venues,” in which new policy actors, or entrepreneurs, become involved in the process. Of specific relevance to this study of the politics of criteria determination is the role of “positive and negative feedback” in shaping the policy process. Baumgartner and Jones (2002) draw attention to “mimicking” and “attention shifting” that
occurs within the black box of policy implementation. This lens could add clarity to the political manipulation and gamesmanship employed by policy entrepreneurs. In the Tennessee case, for instance, Senator Cohen along with Senate Republicans called the bluff of the Democratic-controlled House’s “do nothing” strategy. The punctuated equilibrium lens would explain this decision by the rising expectations to challenge the status quo policy (Baumgartner & Jones, 2002).³

The diffusion of policy innovations framework might also add complementary or competing explanatory power to studies of higher education policy processes. As mentioned earlier, the policy field of the Revised Multiple Streams model captures the influence of merit aid policies diffusing from other states. Indeed, the role of diffusion in policy innovation has recently attracted a growing number of empirical studies considering state postsecondary policy innovation (Doyle, 2006; Hearn & Griswold, 1994; McLendon, Hearn, & Deaton, 2006; McLendon, Heller, & Young, 2005). By extending the political science literature (Berry & Berry, 1990, 2007; Walker, 1969) to higher education, these studies test the extent to which states are more likely to adopt policies of neighboring states and suggest that the diffusion effect may not be limited to region, but that policies may migrate nationally through media accounts and professional associations. Evidence from all three policy episodes in this study suggests that national migration is indeed occurring since policymakers in the three states considered the experience of Georgia’s HOPE Scholarship program. Future studies might delve more deeply into how policies diffuse between states or, using the advocacy coalition term, how “policy-oriented learning” occurs.

The final implication of this study, including the further insights that punctuated equilibrium and diffusion frameworks might add, is that the role of information in the policy process merits further examination. The Revised Multiple Stream model captures the use of information within the policy window, which can serve either as a means for policy actors to support their policy preferences or as a stabilizing influence by issue experts. Research evidence is also captured in the policy field, which includes trends and information relevant to the policy issues. This represents the universe of information on a particular issue which policy actors may utilize or ignore. While this remains under-examined by higher education researchers, political science studies on the use of technical information (Guston, Jones, & Branscomb, 1997; Hird, 2005; Weiss, 1983) consider the source and impact of information on the policymaking process. Further exploring the use and migration of information may hold both research and policy implications. For example, Hird (2005) finds that policymakers perceive non-partisan legislative agen-
cies as important information sources—second only to their constituents. Future studies might consider which sources of information related to higher education issues that elected officials view as important. In addition to such studies effect on increasing our conceptual understanding of the policy process, a deeper understanding of which sources of information policymakers utilize could improve the effectiveness of policy-practitioners who aim to influence the policymaking process.

Notes

1 The broad tenets of the multiple streams framework—the coupling of policies, politics, and problems in support of one solution—could be readily identified in most policy episodes. As such, the following Revised Multiple Streams model attempts to highlight the subtleties of multiple streams, such as the roles of policy entrepreneurs, and incorporates aspects of other theoretical lens to more fully outline its conceptual relevance. The multiple streams framework’s limitations notwithstanding, the serendipitous nature of policy window openings and the perseverance of policy entrepreneurs—more so than the reelection interests of elected officials and the change efforts of policy coalitions—seem to best characterize these three policy episodes of merit aid criteria determination.

2 This distinction may seem counter to policy scholars’ critiques (see Sabatier, 2007) of the “stages heuristic” approach to studying the policy process as a progression of policies through discrete stages (i.e., agenda setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, and implementation). My intent is not to advocate for a “stages” approach. Rather, given that the scope of this study seems to clearly fit within Kingdon’s alternative specification process and that the alternative policies (in this case various merit aid criteria possibilities) seem to exist as national/regional trends, a “policy field” as opposed to a “policy stream” seems to be a better conceptual fit.

3 In fact, this is remarkably consistent with a recent study of governance restructuring in Florida (Mills, 2007), which finds evidence of punctuated equilibrium’s explanatory power in conceptually understanding “the press story” of power politics and ultimately a compromise outlined on a napkin to create a new “super-board” under the governor’s control.

References


