

Leadership Actions to Shape Policy: Theoretical and Practical Reflections

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Discussion outline

- Theoretical directions
 - Public policy-making
 - Contending theories
 - Critique
 - Construction of public problems
- Practical reflections
 - The case of H.B. 156
- *Implications for leading public policy*
- *Skills for policy leaders and change agents*

POSC 101:

How does policy get made?

■ Contending theories

- Systems model
- Group theory
- Elite theory
- Institutionalism
- Punctuated equilibrium
- Rational choice
- Streams model
- Stages model
- Political reasoning

Stages model

Issue Emergence

Agenda-Setting

Alternative Selection

Enactment

Implementation

Evaluation



Political reasoning

- Critique of rational model and stages model
- Central arguments
 - Policy-making is inherently political
 - *Political but reasoned*
 - Reasoning that has as its foundation
 - The categories of thought that have been constructed
 - The image of the world that governs policy and decision-making

Stone, 2002

Political reasoning

- These are continuously constructed
 - In process of determining goals, criteria, justifications for policy
- The ***content*** of the categories are what matter in political decisions that people make

Stone, 2002

Political reasoning

- Once the categories of thought and images of the world are determined, so too are the options
- *Policy making* is thus the process of creating, changing and defending boundaries of categories
 - What is harmful? What is beneficial?
 - What is equitable?
- *Policy analysis* proceeds then as a sorting process of items that do or do not fit into constructed categories

Stone, 2002

Political reasoning

- An example
 - Does library budget A or B give us more value for the money?
 - Question is not answered without answering:
 - What is harm? What kinds of action are possible? What is value?
- Stone's conclusion:
 - Policy is centrally about classification and differentiation
 - Policy making is thus a constant struggle over the *criteria* for classification, the *boundaries* of categories, and the *definition* of ideals that guide the way people behave.

Sociology's contribution

- Construction of public problems (Gusfeld, 1984)
 - Problems that government and public should address
- Central (related) arguments
 - The problems that get worked on at all are defined by group struggle and competition
 - Socially constructed
 - Building blocks of a problem
 - Ownership is assigned
 - Causal theory is accepted
 - Responsibility is affixed

Put another way . . .

- Once the train has left the station, some policy options can no longer be viably introduced.
- Case in point -- House Bill 156 (Mental Health Parity)

H.B. 156 -- “Mental Health Parity”

- Delaware State Legislature
- 1996 legislative session
- Disparity in insurance plans between care for “physical health” and “mental health”
 - Policy choices (Alternative Selection)
 - Fewer days of care for mental health (status quo)
 - Equal care (H.B. 156)
- Considerable opposition from insurers and employers
- Policy goal for both bill sponsors and opposition = equity

H.B. 156 -- Leadership in action

- Temporary coalition established
 - Legislator, legislative staff
 - Mental health advocates, providers and consumers
- Developed strategy to understand and overcome opposition
 - Conversations with opponents
 - Concluded two models:
 - Supporters -- Mental health problems are same as physical health problem; should not be penalized for it
 - Opponents -- Mental health problems are generally personal “failing,” lack of fortitude and strength. Awarding equal care would penalize those who use system fairly (higher health care costs).

H.B. 156 -- Leadership in action

- Organized and facilitated eight weeks of public hearings and testimony
 - Open up the process to include challenging constructs of the issue and problem
 - Mobilizing the resources necessary to change the content of the categories of what “is your fault” v. what “isn’t your fault”
 - Academic researchers
 - Scholarly research
 - Credible sources (accessing those who would have more influence)
 - Numbers game
- Continued provision of information (6 month process)

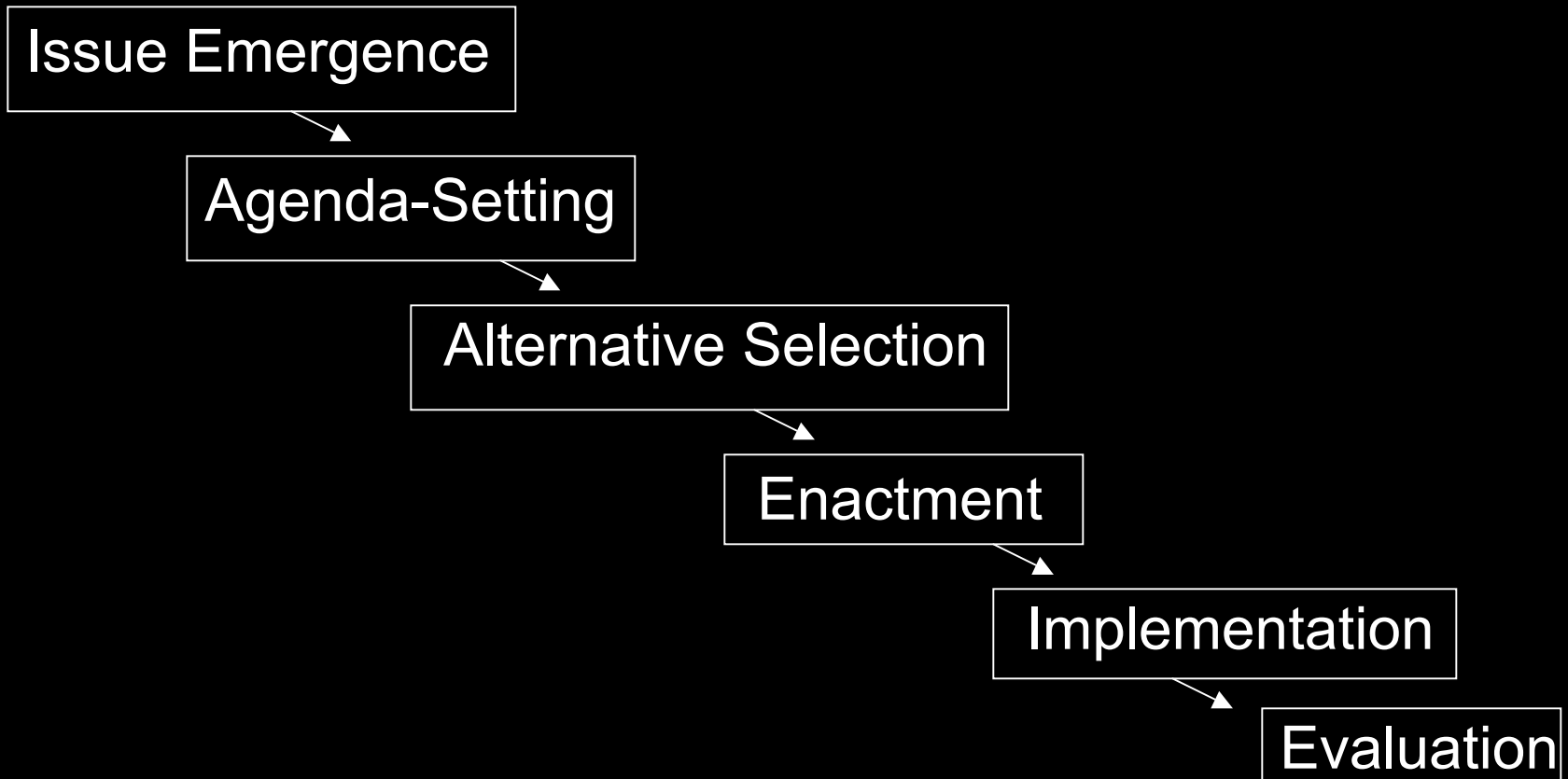
H.B. 156 -- Results

- Redefined the “issue”
 - Causal theory (biological basis)
 - Affixed responsibility (off of individual)
 - Assigned ownership (to insurer rather than individual)
- New understanding of issue allowed goal to be understood more broadly
 - From equity to security and equity
- Lesson: Without having changed the “image of the world” and the foundation for analysis, parity could never have been an option

Implications for leading change

- Leadership and leaders
 - Process of mobilizing others towards a positive change
 - Facilitators of the process
- What do policy leaders need to do to create change?
 - Policy leader versus policy analyst versus policy entrepreneur
 - Policy leader -- mobilizing others towards change in the policy process
 - Policy analyst -- using evaluative research to improve or legitimate the practical implications of a policy-oriented program
 - Policy entrepreneur -- introducing, translating, and helping to implement new ideas into public practice

Stages model: a second look



Leading policy change

Influencing categories of thought (foundations of analysis)

Getting (and keeping) policy argument on the agenda

Influencing category boundaries

Justifying criteria and inclusion

Implementation

Evaluation



Broaden your expertise

- Ethical competence
 - Identify own values and act on them
- Communication (ideas and values)
- Framing skills
- Persuasion and influence
 - Multiple sources of influence and power
- Develop/influence process
 - Open and inclusive
- Energize and create enthusiasm amongst “base”
- Listening
 - Opponents needs and ideas

Leadership and organizing

- Mobilizing and organizing
 - Direct action organizing
 - Risk-taking, confidence, humor
 - Coalition-building
 - Identifying partners, talking across disciplines
 - Consensus-facilitation
 - Listening, flexibility and adaptability, identify partners' needs

Questions?

Skills for organizers

- Challenge the status quo
 - Curiosity
 - Irreverence
- Create a shared vision
 - Imagination
- Inspire a sense of shared values
 - Identify your own values
- Organizing
 - Flexibility and adaptability
 - Organizing approaches
- Confidence and risk-taking