In this lecture we briefly review the ‘public policy’ that is created through the interaction of these civic groups with public managers and politicians. A Brazilian source (Viana 1996, p.6), that I like just because few other people can read it (!), offers a four stage model of public policy:

- Agenda setting
- Formulation
- Implementation
- Evaluation

There is an obvious similarity of this with the Brewer article you have been invited to read. This hardly exhausts the offerings for stages models, though, as indicated in Table 1, on the following page, which provides some examples of other ‘stages’ models of public policy.

We'll use a Brewer & DeLeon-modified version of Viana's model to structure this class:

- Agenda setting
- Estimation
- Selection
- Implementation
- Evaluation
- (Termination?)

This lecture will discuss the 'stages' model of public policy, especially with the intent of pointing out that public policy involves a series of stages, and each one affords different opportunities for NPOs seeking to influence public policy, while also requiring different skills and techniques to do this successfully.
Table 1
Some stages models of public policy, compared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agenda setting</td>
<td>Initiation</td>
<td>Agenda setting</td>
<td>verify, define, detail problem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Policy design</td>
<td>establish evaluation criteria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formulation</td>
<td>Estimation</td>
<td>Policy design</td>
<td>identify objectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>verify, define, detail problem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>establish evaluation criteria</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>identify alternatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>predict consequences of alternatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td></td>
<td>evaluate consequences</td>
<td>evaluate alternatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>select optimal alternative</td>
<td>distinguish among alternatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>monitor and evaluate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agenda setting

Agenda setting is perhaps the most chaotic, least amenable to 'analysis' stage of the policy process. The 'people of Vermont', it is widely argued, had civil unions thrust onto their policy agenda by an unelected judiciary. Every time a plane crashes public administrators around the country have air safety thrust onto their policy agendas. Civil groups often go to great lengths to try to grab the attention of policy makers, or else the attention of the public and so through them the attention of policy makers. Just as in advertising sex and violence sells; so in agenda setting sex (see PETA's long running series of naked photo ops) and violence (such as the so-called Battle of Seattle) are often used to attract attention to a cause.

At the same time agenda setting is extremely important. Regardless of how rigorous the methods employed, how deep the heart tempering these methods, and how righteous the ethical standards keeping it all on the straight and narrow, wholly venal political processes may have been in motion ensuring that policy analysts are only being called on to analyze an issue favouring a narrow special interest, while other, more pressing issues are not considered. On the other hand, many items are put on the agenda from within the policy process, by analysts themselves. Evidence suggesting that a problem has arisen (world topping health care costs and mediocre aggregate outcomes) can set the policy agenda.

Brewer and deLeon's model of the policy process, from a brilliant but no longer published book, uses 'initiation' as its opening stage. This initiation includes a number of analytical steps, as well:
identification of the problem context, determination of goals and objectives, and generation of alternatives (1983: 33). Viana's model lumps these into the formulation stage. But the first component of Brewer and deLeon's initiation gets at what Viana has in mind with agenda setting: recognition of the problem.

"Without the perception of a problem, threat or opportunity there is no incentive for the organization to disturb the status quo, or, in our terms, to expend organizational energy initiating the policy process. Recognition is a function of both information received and one's ability to interpret it. The linkage between the individual and organizational recognition is crucial. Thus, we examine recognition of the problem as both an individual and an organizational phenomenon" (p. 33).

Some scholars of the agenda setting in the policy process identify at least a public and an institutional agenda. The 'public' agenda would be those issues that the public, however amorphous the concept, thinks is most important. Polling data, for instance, is probably the best indicator of this. Keep in mind, though, that even in a democracy, that the public thinks it doesn't make it so, any more than if the public votes for a sunny day, this can keep the clouds away. The 'institutional' agenda, on the other hand, consists of those issues actually taken up by the formal policy-making process (generally an executive agency or a legislature). Kingdon’s focus is on the institutional agenda:

“"The agenda, as I conceive it, is the list of subjects or problems to which government officials, and people outside of government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention at any given time.” (p. 3)

**Estimation:**

To return to my favourite out of print book on public policy, Brewer and deLeon's (1983) six stage model of the policy process breaks formulation (i.e.: once an issue gets on the policy agenda, it needs to be analyzed, or policy responses 'formulated') down into two separate steps: estimation and selection.

"Estimation continues work begun during initiation: systematic investigation of a problem and thoughtful assessment of options and alternatives are its characteristic tasks. Specifically, estimation concerns the accurate determination of all likely costs and benefits that are expected to flow from decisions taken during the subsequent, or selection, stage of the overall process. Consideration is given both to the probable consequences of positive action and to those expected to result from inaction, whether intentional or not. Estimation efforts aim to reduce uncertainties about possible choices to the greatest extent possible, given time, intellectual, and other constraints” (p. 83).

**Selection:**

"Most simply, selection is the choice among policy alternatives that have been generated and their likely effects on the problem estimated. It is the decision-making stage of the policy process. It is the most overtly political stage insofar as the many potential solutions to a given problem must somehow be winnowed down and but one or a select few picked and readied for use. Obviously most possible choices will not be realized and deciding not to take particular courses of action is as much a part of selection as finally settling on the best
course. Many individuals and groups are certain not to get what they want or only obtain substantially modified versions of their preferences as a result of the consensus building and conflict resolution inherent in politics" (p. 179).

For my purposes, the useful thing about Brewer and deLeon’s treatment of policy formulation is in that they separate the analytical (estimation) and the political (selection) elements of it: the policy response that a detached estimation of costs and benefits suggests is optimal may not get selected, if a powerful enough interest is opposed. This is not to say that estimation is worthless as, all else equal, the policy alternative with better numbers backing it up will be selected, all else equal. Two glaring exceptions in contemporary American policy discussions are claims that 1. further (or recent past, for that matter!) tax cuts for the wealthy contribute to positive economic outcomes. Certainly in the case of deficits and economic growth, this position has no evidentiary support (see Table 2);

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>President</th>
<th>Highest Tax</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>GDP %Δ</th>
<th>Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1917-21</td>
<td>Wilson</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925-31</td>
<td>Coolidge/Hoover</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>-7.5</td>
<td>+0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932-38</td>
<td>Roosevelt</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>-3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-46</td>
<td>Roosevelt</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>-13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947-63</td>
<td>Truman/Ike</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-73</td>
<td>Kennedy/Johnson</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-81</td>
<td>Nixon/Carter</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>-2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982-87</td>
<td>Reagan</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>-4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988-90</td>
<td>Reagan/Bush</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>-3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-92</td>
<td>Bush</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>-4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-2002</td>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-09</td>
<td>Bush II</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>-3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. claims that the US has the best health care system in the world. There may be whiz bang technology, but this is meaningless if access is limited. As well, we do abysmally in terms of cost v. aggregate outcomes, see Table 3, on the next page.

Despite such obfuscation in the face of arithmetic, formulation is still, along with evaluation, a very analytical phase of the process.

Implementation

Brewer and deLeon (1983) introduce implementation as:

"Implementation is an important but frequently overlooked step in the general policy process model. Lacking proper implementation, policy innovation and selection may end up being little more than intellectual exercises; indeed, faulty policy implementation can invalidate the earlier, carefully considered steps in the policy process and thereby intensify the original problem. The process, then, warrants our careful attention" (p. 249).
For our purposes note that with contracting out and so devolution, nonprofit organizations (civic groups!) are increasingly used as implementing agency. However in this class on civic groups and public policy we are as (maybe more?) concerned with the policy advocacy role of NPOs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3</th>
<th>Comparative health indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy (years)</td>
<td>77.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant mortality (per 1000 births)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physicians (per 100k pop.)</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health spending ($ per capita)</td>
<td>6096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health spending (% of GDP)</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health spending (% from government)</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol consumption (liters p.c., 15+ years)</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking (%)</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obesity (%)</td>
<td>32.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic freedom</td>
<td>7.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil/political freedom</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Evaluation

Patton and Sawicki (1993) provide a nice introduction behind the principle of monitoring and evaluation:

"Analysts are also called upon to conduct quick ex-post analyses; that is, to conduct analyses of operating programs, to determine whether they are producing the desired results, to recommend whether they ought to be modified, and even to determine whether resources should be shifted to other programs. Often these ex-post analyses must be conducted quickly using available data, but even quick analyses should be designed so that their outcomes can be evaluated in rigorous, reliable ways" (p. 363).

For our purposes, evaluation is, like formulation, a very analytical stage. To simplify the class, we will treat them together.

### Termination
Brewer and deLeon describe termination as follows:

“Termination generally refers to the adjustment of policies and programs that have become dysfunctional, redundant, outmoded, unnecessary, or even counterproductive. As termination is the finish of one set of expectations, rules and practices, a sense of finality is easily seen in the concept; however, less evident but perhaps more important is the idea that termination is frequently only the replacement of one set of practices with another. Termination signals the beginning of the policy process as much as it does its end” (p. 385).

Some limitations of the stages model

This stages stuff is all fine and dandy, but an article by Guy Peters (1992) does an excellent job of pointing to some of the limitations of using 'the stages model' as a structural element in teaching public policy. The more useful points seem to be:

- "There is an assumption that an issue arises in the environment of government, that it is then processed through the remaining stages of the policy making process, and then a policy emerges at the end. The agenda-setting literature has tended to question these mechanistic assumptions to some degree..." (p. 164).
- "Another important problem with the stages versions of the process model is the assumption, more implicit than explicit, that each stage is completed before the next is undertaken, and that the process is linear" (p. 165).
- "...the policy-making process... may be truncated at any place along the way towards a final decision and then later resumed." (p. 165).
- "...some prospective evaluation almost certainly occurs prior to any formal evaluation of the success or failure of a program..." (p. 165).
- "Associated with the problem of linearity in policy-making models is the problem that most discussions of the stages model of the process appear to be based on an assumption that there is a single transit through the process in each policy area. ...most policy-making in contemporary democracies is policy succession rather than policy initiation" (p. 165).

Civic groups and policy stages

As indicated, for me the stages model is interesting because it suggests that public policy isn't a single, discreet event, like a vote in Congress. Instead:

- It starts at least as far back as part of a social process of dialogue, as various individuals and groups experience life, think about what is going on, and ponder what might lead to better policy outcomes, whether for the public, or for themselves.
- Many of these people then decide to try to act on the conclusions of their pondering, marshaling their resources in the policy game to try to influence outcomes. Heavily resourced actors (the wealthy, the influential) may try to act on their own, but most seek allies among those who share their views, aggregating their influence.
- These actors (individual or combined) then have to try to bump their issue onto the formal institutional agenda.
  - Actors with ample resources (financial or influence) may go directly to legislators and try to get a bill considered.
Other actors may instead try to marshal more resources by trying to move the issue onto the public agenda, so that more folks join their cause, further aggregating resources in the hope of attracting the attention of policy makers.

Resources in this part of the policy cycle can be very diverse:

- Cash can buy advertising time, open doors (campaign donations; offers of investing in a community, or threats to pull out), and myriad other things.
- Non-cash influence can come in a number of forms:
  - Personal connection: bend a policy maker's ear at your child's baseball game.
  - Fame: personalities can always attract a television camera.
  - Numbers: a group of 1000 can cast 1000 votes, attracting 1000 times the attention of a politician than an individual.
  - Reason: the linked article appeared in a British newspaper in 1961, and by most accounts it set off a global human rights revolution, certainly leading to the establishment of Amnesty International. Policy insiders (you, after you graduate, if you take the initiative to produce a powerful report on an over-looked issue) can also bring reason to bear in the agenda-setting stage; and nonprofit groups often release studies that seek to influence what government decides to address.

- Media stunts: the poor person's policy influence.
- Terror? Note that terror has been a way that some anti-systemic actors use to get their issue on the policy agenda: blow something up, kill someone, destroy property, etc.
- Chance also often puts issues on the policy agenda. Every time a shark attacks someone, or a plane crashes, surf and airplane safety rise onto the public agenda.

Once an issue gets on the institutional agenda, various groups seek to influence perceptions of the issue. Those for whom the facts are consistent with their interests, try to produce these facts as convincingly as possible. Those for whom the facts are inconsistent with their interests try to reinterpret the facts, invent new interpretations, attack the messenger, obfuscate, or change the subject. Either way, strong analytical skills (as opposed to the myriad methods used in agenda setting) are critically important for the civic group at this stage.

Then, as Brewer and deLeon indicate, after all that policy formulation, the actual selection process goes back into the political, influence peddling mosh pit. Take the decision to move an aircraft carrier from Norfolk to Jacksonville. The logic of this is impeccable, yet Virginia legislators are twisting all the arms they can to prevent a decision clearly in the best interests of US security.

Policy evaluation then goes back to an analytical phase, though again groups who don't like an otherwise successful policy will try to influence perceptions.

Policy termination, again, which might be thought of as part of a 'selection' phase of program evaluation, can become highly political, as resistance rises from groups that benefit from existing programs that have outlived their usefulness; or existing programs that need reform in order to serve their public goals.

II. Models, approaches (or theories?) of public policy

Like public administration in general (which Americans didn't start to systematically think about until 1887, at the earliest), systematic interest in public policy only began in perhaps the 1950s, with an article by Harold Lasswell (click for JSTOR link) generally credited as the birth of the
formal study of public policy in the US. Observers have made up for lost time, though, having since developed myriad perspectives. What to make of these? Don't think about which you think works best; or worse, which is the correct perspective. Instead, each has something to tell us about how public policy works.

**Origins.** Keep in mind, too, that the above just refers to the formal study of public policy. All decision making involves some sort of policy analytical format. Benjamin Franklin, in a famous letter of 1772 (click here), is supposed to have provided an early formal statement of the process.

**Rationalism** -- "Rationalism tries to learn all the value preferences extant in a society, assign each value a relative weight, discover all the policy alternatives available, know all the consequences of each alternative, calculate how the selection of any one policy will affect the remaining alternatives in terms of opportunity costs, and ultimately select the policy alternative that is the most efficient in terms of the costs and benefits of social values" (Henry 2007, p. 290).

- Though this is almost a straw person description of rationalism, leading the reader to come to the obvious conclusion that rationalism is impossible, so instead let's just pull policy out of our backsides! The perfect rationality described above is not possible, but one can try to be as rational as possible. The major insight of critics of the rational model should be that one needs to be conscious of the limitations of human rationality.

**Rational choice** – also ‘public choice’ (which we’ve seen before, in week three), an oddly named perspective (because critics argue that it doesn't feature choice by a rational public), but the logic of it is that better policy will result if incentives are put in place, and the individuals are allowed to choose. It is a market model: if you don't like pollution, tax it. The increased cost of polluting will discourage it, but those individuals willing to pay a lot to pollute can still do so.
- Lefties hate its market implications. Yet even many environmentalists recognize that if you appeal to people not to engage in environmentally destructive behaviour, but the economic incentives encourage environmentally destructive behaviour, then you will get environmentally destructive behaviour.

**Incrementalist models**

**Muddling through** – incrementalism, or the anti-rationalism. For Charles Lindblom (1959, p. 86): "Making policy is at best a rough process. Neither social scientists, nor politicians, nor public administrators yet know enough about the social world to avoid repeated error in predicting the consequences of policy moves. A wise policy-maker consequently expects that his policies will achieve only part of what he hopes and at the same time will produce unanticipated consequences he would have preferred to avoid. If he proceeds through a succession of incremental changes, he avoids serious lasting mistakes in several ways."

Muddling through is a perspective on public policy that recognizes that the process of human governance rarely involves the policy process model described in the first part of this lecture: a
problem is identified, analyzed, solution implemented, success verified, and everyone goes home and has a well-deserved beer.

- Instead, we identify what we think is a problem, have a whack at understanding it, and implement a response.
- After some time we reassess the situation, realize that though we've made some progress (hopefully), we didn't anticipate some things, and so the policy is changed.
- Again, we go back and realize that (say) the change screwed things up worse, so we reassess, make another adjustment.
- Another evaluation suggests that this is helping, we're again making progress, but another unanticipated issue has become apparent, and so the program gets modified yet again.
- In short, public policy (and all policy, business firms do this, we do it ourselves as we go through life, not to mention our day) is a matter not of brilliant solutions heroically implemented; but rather is an incremental process of 'muddling through' to a better situation, with lots of meetings, lots of revised plans, and lots of well-deserved beer.

**Elite/mass model** -- "contends that a policymaking and policy-executing elite is able to act in an environment characterized by apathy and information distortion, and thereby govern a largely passive mass" (Henry 2007, p. 285).


**Group model** -- emphasizes the influence of 'interest groups'.

**Systems model** -- "relies on concepts of information theory (especially feedback, input, and output) and conceives of the process as being essentially cyclical" (p. 285-6).


- The systems idea: "an entity in which everything relates to everything else" (p. 150).

- Five features:
  - Objectives: Organizational and personal
    - fixed constraints
    - resources
    - activities, goals and performance measures
    - decision making concerning the amount of resources to make available to each subsystem.
  - Systems within systems -- inter-relationships exist between policy systems.
    - Weak schools, for instance, are not just an educational issue, they also affect crime rates, housing values, and investment, among other things. Cutting school funding to save money may therefore simply increase crime control, incarceration, and social welfare costs.
    - Cutting funding for road maintenance (to save taxpayer taxes) may increase costs to taxpayers, as they have to fix their cars that are jolted by potholed roads.
Institutionalist (and neo-institutionalist) model -- "focuses on the organizational chart of government" (p. 286).

Organized anarchy
- According to Kingdon, public policy is driven by three 'streams':
  - problems -- more or less our 'agenda setting' above.
  - politics -- the interaction of politicians jockeying for political advantage and seeking to carry out their mandates.
  - policy -- the analytical process of formulating policy alternatives
- When these three streams meet -- an issue is identified, a political leader decides to address it, and the policy system is able to formulate a response to the issue -- policy results. Note that if an issue fails to attract attention, nothing will happen. If the legislative process doesn't decide to address the issue that is waving its arms wildly, trying to attract attention, nothing will happen. If some sort of reasonable policy response can't be developed for the issue that the politicians have decided to address, nothing will happen.

Symbolic policy

I should mention what has been referred to as ‘symbolic policy’, which are more or less meaningless government programs which neither have a chance at alleviating the underlying problem, nor are intended to do so. Instead, they merely seek to satisfy public demands that government ‘do something’.

Public goods, exclusion/consumption model -- the issue here is more to try to get a better handle on what sorts of areas government action (public policy) should get involved in. Henry's Table 10-2 (reproduced on the following page) sums it up nicely.

Strategic planning -- a periodic attempt to systematically assess how the future is likely to unfold, and to react to this accordingly. Like leadership, this is one of those buzz words that get my goat. The 'strategic' part of it just seems to lead to way too much testosterone and pretense. As a result, managers 'strategize' like so many kids over games of Risk or Stratego. The logic is sound, though, in terms of projecting forward and broadening the planning process. Rather than just using the past to project a budget for the next year (say), as Denhardt and Grubbs (2003) put it

"A number of writers have commented on the rapidity of the social and technological changes we are now experiencing and on the turbulence and complexity that such changes generate. In an effort to recognize and respond to such changes many private corporations began programs... to systematically plan for future development" (p. 256).
### Goods and services according to the criteria of exclusion and consumption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exclusion</th>
<th>Individual use</th>
<th>Joint use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feasible</td>
<td>Private good and services (a bag of groceries, a haircut, a meal in a restaurant)</td>
<td>Toll goods and services (cable television, telephone service, theaters, libraries, electric power)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Common-pool goods and services (water in a public well, fish in the ocean, air to breathe)</td>
<td>Collective, or public, goods and services (peace and security, public safety, pollution control, weather forecasts, public television, radio)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Henry 2013, p. 348

Steps in the process:
- Statement of mission or objectives
- Environmental analysis
- Strengths and weaknesses
- Values of organizational leaders
- Development of alternative strategies

For example: SWOT analysis

- assess
  - strengths
  - weaknesses
- identify
  - goals
  - measures for these goals
  - programs to achieve the goals

Again, this is the classic ‘rationalist’ model, in which we can conclude that health care costs are too high in America, then we fix it. Tragically, the world is seldom so easy, indeed a useful definition for public policy might be the study of the real gnarly, hard-to-fix problems in society.

**References**


