

Understanding the Politics of Public Policy

Outline

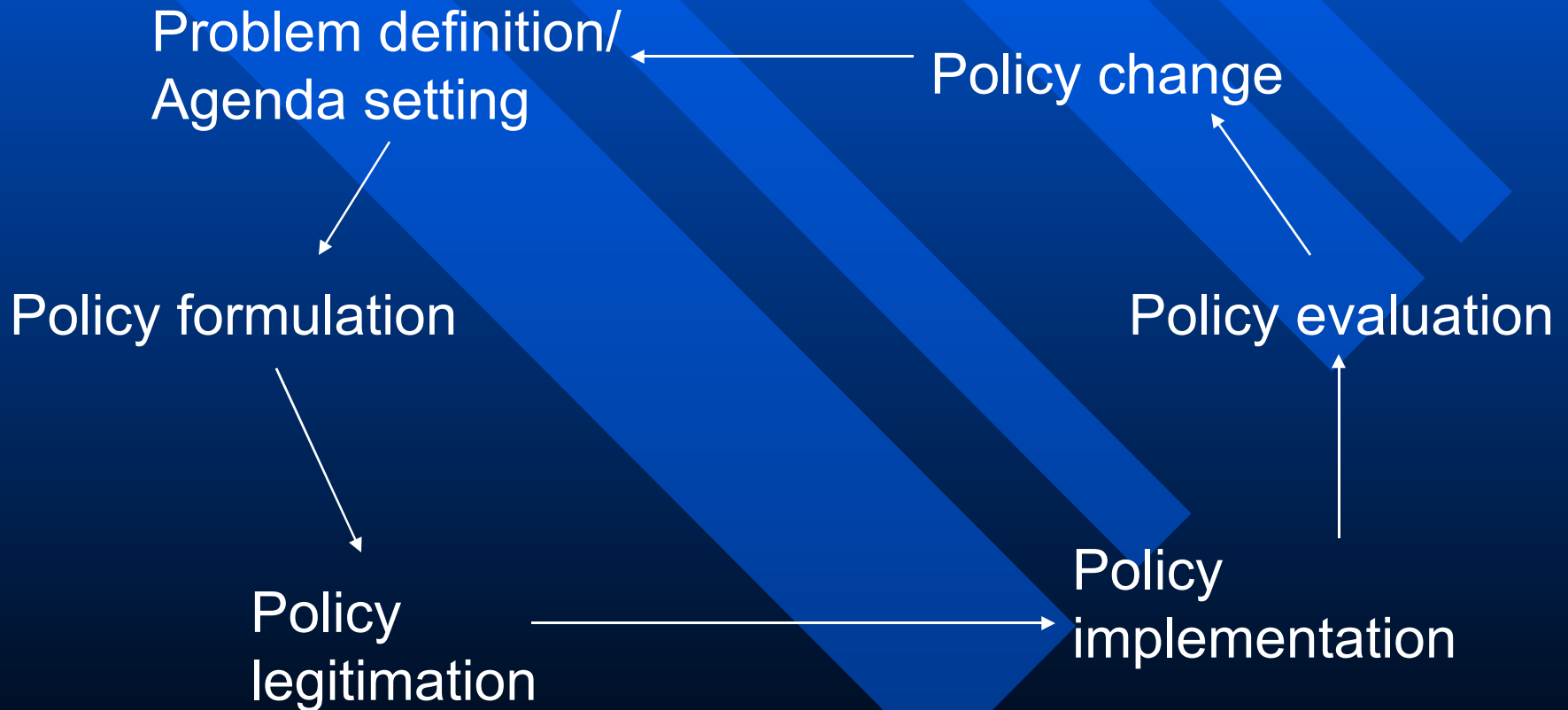
- Models and theories of public policy
- Policy process model
 - problem definition and agenda setting
 - policy formulation
 - policy legitimation
 - policy implementation
 - policy evaluation/policy change
- Instruments of public policy
- Policy typologies

Models of Public Policy

- Elite theory
- Group theory
- Institutionalism
- Rational choice theory
- Political systems theory
- Policy process model

Policy Process Model

Policy Cycle



Problem Definition

- Often difficult to define a problem
- What is a current problem?
- Why is it a problem?
- Definition is based on your own perspective
- Who's involved?

Agenda Setting

- Systemic vs. government agenda
 - **systemic**: public is aware of and may be discussing
 - **government**: considered to be those issues and problems that policymakers are addressing at a certain time
- What issues would you consider to be on the government agenda currently?

Streams of Agenda Setting

Problem stream

Policy stream

Political stream

Opportunity for
agenda items



Explanations for Agenda Setting: Problems, Politics, Participants

■ Problems

- mandated items
- magnitude of problem
- focusing events (e.g., Sept. 11, Love Canal)
- relationship to symbols
- absence of private means
- spillover impacts
- analogy to other problems

Explanations (cont'd)

- Politics
 - political process change
 - » change in administration, public opinion, etc.
- Visible participants (entrepreneurs)
 - president and staff
 - congressional leadership
 - media
 - interest groups

Explanations: Saliency and Conflict

Influences on Agenda Setting		
	Level of salience is HIGH	Level of salience is LOW
Level of conflict is HIGH	Crime, Gun control	WORST CHANCE Abortion rights
Level of conflict is LOW	BEST CHANCE Airline safety	Pork-barrel projects (e.g., research grants, water projects)

Policy Formulation

- Debate over alternative policy choices
- Importance of policy analysis
- Actors provide their preferred positions
- Who's involved
 - bureaucracy, EOP
 - legislature/staff
 - interest groups



Policy Legitimation

- Appropriateness of government action
- Important for garnering support
- Deals w/two major issues
 - Substance of the policy
 - Process of adopting the policy

Policy Implementation

- Where actual intervention is seen
- Activities that put programs into effect
 - money spent
 - laws passed
 - regulations formulated
- Done mostly by executive branch through **regulations**

Policy Evaluation and Change

- Step often disregarded in process
- Difficult to identify the goals of a program and if they were achieved
- Different types of impacts
 - direct vs. indirect
 - short-term vs. long-term
- Hopefully, will feed information back into the policy process

Instruments of Policy

- Regulation
- Government management
- Taxing and spending
- Market mechanisms
- Education and information

Lowi Policy Typology

- Distributive policy
 - individualized grants and programs
- Redistributive policy
 - one gains from another's loss
- Regulatory policy
 - government restriction of choice