

Agenda Setting

- ‘issues’ include problems, opportunities, and trends of uncertain character that might become the subject of public policy (Downs, 1972)
- When and how do problems get Government attention?

Agenda setting agenda!

- Three theories of agenda setting
- How to research agenda setting
- Example of gender equality agenda setting
- Tutorial task
- Essay clinic

When do problems get on government agendas?

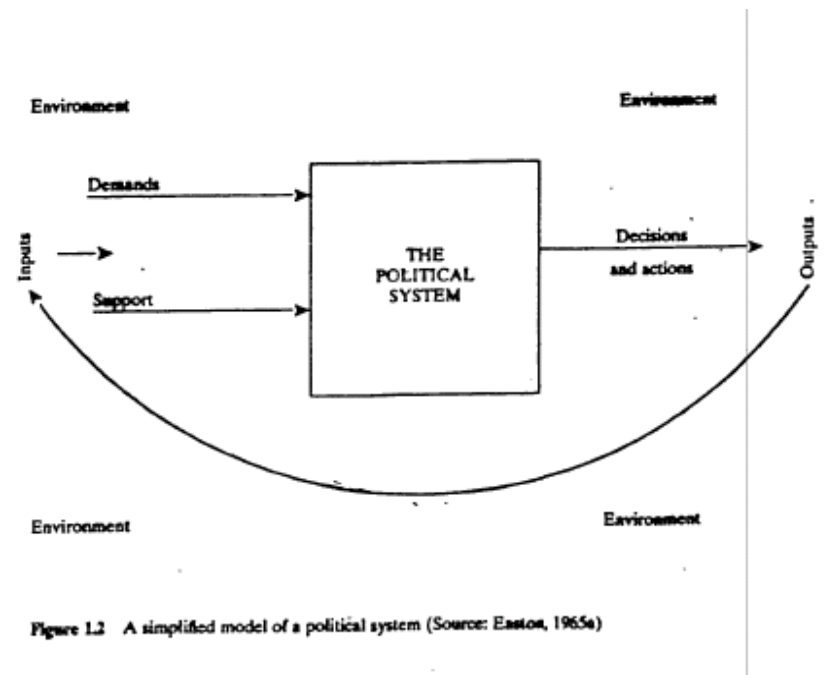
- From problem definition to agenda setting
- NB Difference between 'systemic' and 'institutional' agenda (Cobb & Elder)
- Government agendas = 'issues to which Government is paying serious attention'
- How do we know Government is paying serious attention?
- <http://policyagendasuk.wordpress.com/>

The UK Policy Agendas Project major topic codes

- 1. Macroeconomics
- 2. Civil Rights, Minority Issues, Immigration and Civil Liberties
- 3. Health
- 4. Agriculture
- 5. Labour and Employment
- 6. Education and Culture
- 7. Environment
- 8. Energy
- 10. Transportation
- 12. Law, Crime, and Family Issues
- 13. Social Welfare
- 14. Community Development, Planning and Housing Issues
- 15. Banking, Finance, and Domestic Commerce
- 16. Defence
- 17. Space, Science, Technology and Communications
- 18. Foreign Trade
- 19. International Affairs and Foreign Aid
- 20. Government Operations
- 21. Public Lands, Water Management, Colonial and Territorial Issues
- <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/may/09/queens-speech-2012-full-text>

Theories of agenda setting

- Democratic responsiveness (Dahl 1971)
- Public concern <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/3064/EconomistIpsos-MORI-October-Issues-Index.aspx>



Does Public Opinion inform Government Agendas?

- <http://policyagendasuk.wordpress.com/>

Problems in linking public concerns and Government agendas

- Second face of power – some voices louder
- Question – how do Governments manage issues away from policy agendas?
- Even when ‘observable conflict’ – public concern may not result in action
- Issues might rise up the public or media agenda but no policy response – ‘issue attention cycle’ (Downs)
- No solution or solution too difficult

Kingdon and Windows of Opportunity for policy change

- Kingdon sees policy process as messy –
- occasionally problems, policy solutions and politics come together
- Problems are ‘public matters requiring attention eg fiscal crises or environmental degradation’ John, p 173 – 4
- Policies are (framed) ‘proposals for change based on accumulation of knowledge and development of interest among specialists in a policy sector’ John p 173
- Politics – elections, swings in public opinion or mood, new institutional or decision making circumstances, crisis
- le predictable and unpredictable
- form a ‘window of opportunity’ for policy proposals to get serious Government attention

Actors in policy change

- Policy entrepreneurs – politicians, bureaucrats, analysts, consultants, journalists, academics, campaigners (Kingdon)
- Policy advocacy coalitions – competing groups with different policy frames and solutions who sometimes form alliances (Sabatier)
- UK – policy networks – politicians, bureaucrats and key insider pressure groups (Rhodes and Marsh, Smith eg agriculture)

Definition of networks

- ‘Policy networks are sets of formal institutional and informal linkages between governmental and other actors structured around shared if endlessly negotiated beliefs and interests in public policy making and implementation. These actors are interdependent and policy emerges from the interactions between them’
- Rhodes, Oxford Handbook, p 426

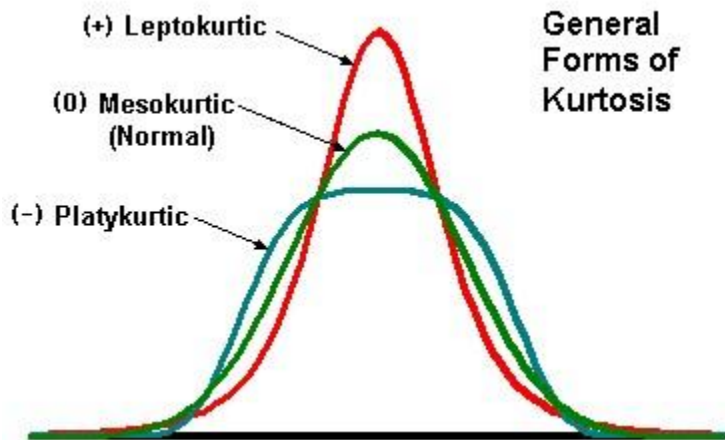
Politics and the window of opportunity

- Fits US policy making (and EU?)
- Does it fit here? (US more venues? more actors?)
- UK – more centralised, strong party system, permanent bureaucracy, policy networks in Government.
- Zahariadis, Ambiguity, Time and Multiple Streams, in theories of the Policy Process, Sabatier, Ed, pg 79
“Roles in Britain are less ambiguous and contested, links are tighter and more formalised and fewer actions have an input into policy choice”
- Does it work with every policy domain?
- Concern over economy key in terms of ‘space’ for other issues

Punctuated equilibriums

- Baumgartner and Jones - assumptions
- Government attention limited
- Institutional friction
- Sometimes issues 'catch fire'
- Punctuated equilibrium
- Does this work in UK?
- How can you tell?

Identifying a punctuated equilibrium



- Normal distribution if say budget change incremental
- Leptokurtic if a few changes to budgets which were exceptionally high

Punctuated Equilibriums in the UK -

- Agendas team found Queen's speech least 'punctuated' but budgets did show some 'punctuated equilibriums' (John and Margetts) (Law and order leptokurtic but social security 'normal' – why?)
- Some responsiveness – some domains locked into policy community
- Also high salience legislative punctuated equilibriums associated with issue expansion, eg pensions, exogenous shocks, int trade 1930s public salience, eg strikes, immigration 1960s, environment in early 1990s, 'partisan' punctuations, civil rights 1960s, privatization 1980s
- (Policy Studies Journal, 40 (1) 2012)

Getting Gender on the Agenda in the UK

- Women and New Labour
- A window of opportunity for policy change?
- Problem – 17% pay gap, care gap, poverty in old age gendered
- Policies – feminist policy ideas in NL
- Politics – need for women's votes, feminist ministers in positions of power in Government

The verdict?

- A window of opportunity for feminist policy change?
- Yes ...but financial constraints and also needed to make alliances with non feminists – anti-poverty agenda, not gender equality agenda
- Some successes – (minimum wage, sure start, better parental leave, pension improvements)
- Differential implementation – Harman and Hewitt (Annesley and Gains Political Studies)
- Very uneven impact, retrenchment?
- Ie WOP doesn't mean getting on decision agenda and
- Ie getting on agenda doesn't mean policy change
- Kingdon talks of 'probabilistic' policy change

Constraints on agenda change

- Institutional - path dependency and networks (see Annesley and Gains, Gender Power and the Core Executive, Political Studies)
- Economic (See Annesley and Gains BJPIR)

Gender gap

Equal pay is a step too far in recession, says rights body

By Anna Hodge

Bill 'should not enforce' salary comparisons

Gap between men and women is 17% and rising

Amelia Gentleman

The body responsible for safeguarding equality in the UK will tell the government today that the economic climate is making it impossible to enforce equal pay reviews on firms.

With women's pay on average 17% less than men's and the gap increasing, the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, founded 18 months ago, will say that the reviews should be excluded from the forthcoming equalities bill which it publishes its recommendations.

Summarising the strategy, the chief executive, Shona Hyatt, said: "The bill currently envisaged, while necessary, and called for 'radical reform in the future'. This would be a long-term exercise requiring a complete overhaul. More immediately, the government's approach is based on 'encouraging' companies to improve their record voluntarily.

The Equal Opportunities Commission, the body which preceded the EHRC, had recommended that companies should carry out equal pay reviews as a first step

to addressing disparities. But the EHRC does not want pay reviews to be in the equalities bill, due to be published next month. "They can be a helpful diagnostic tool, but they are not the whole answer. I think we do need to be realistic about the economic climate," Hyatt said.

Pay audits are unpopular with businesses both because they are expensive and because a revelation of pay disparities often unleashes legal action by women who had not realised they were underpaid.

The first reason why it is a mistake in the light of the recession to launch campaigns for women's rights, "We must not get caught in a cycle of doing it all. Both causes we will trade in women's rights," said Catherine Kake, director of the Poverty Society. Sarah Butler, head of the equality department at the TUC, said pay audits were "a useful part" of eliminating the pay gap. "Until companies are forced to shine a light on where the anomalies are, you can't address the problem," she said.

Brownie McKeown, a director of Quisno, said she was "very sceptical about any measure that doesn't actually compel any employers to do an audit." "For voluntary equal pay audits, that's weak," she said.

Despite the government's commitment to eliminating it, the pay gap rose slightly last year and women working part time are now paid on average 36.5% less than men. The forthcoming equalities bill and been welcomed by the EHRC and campaigners as a "significant opportunity" to

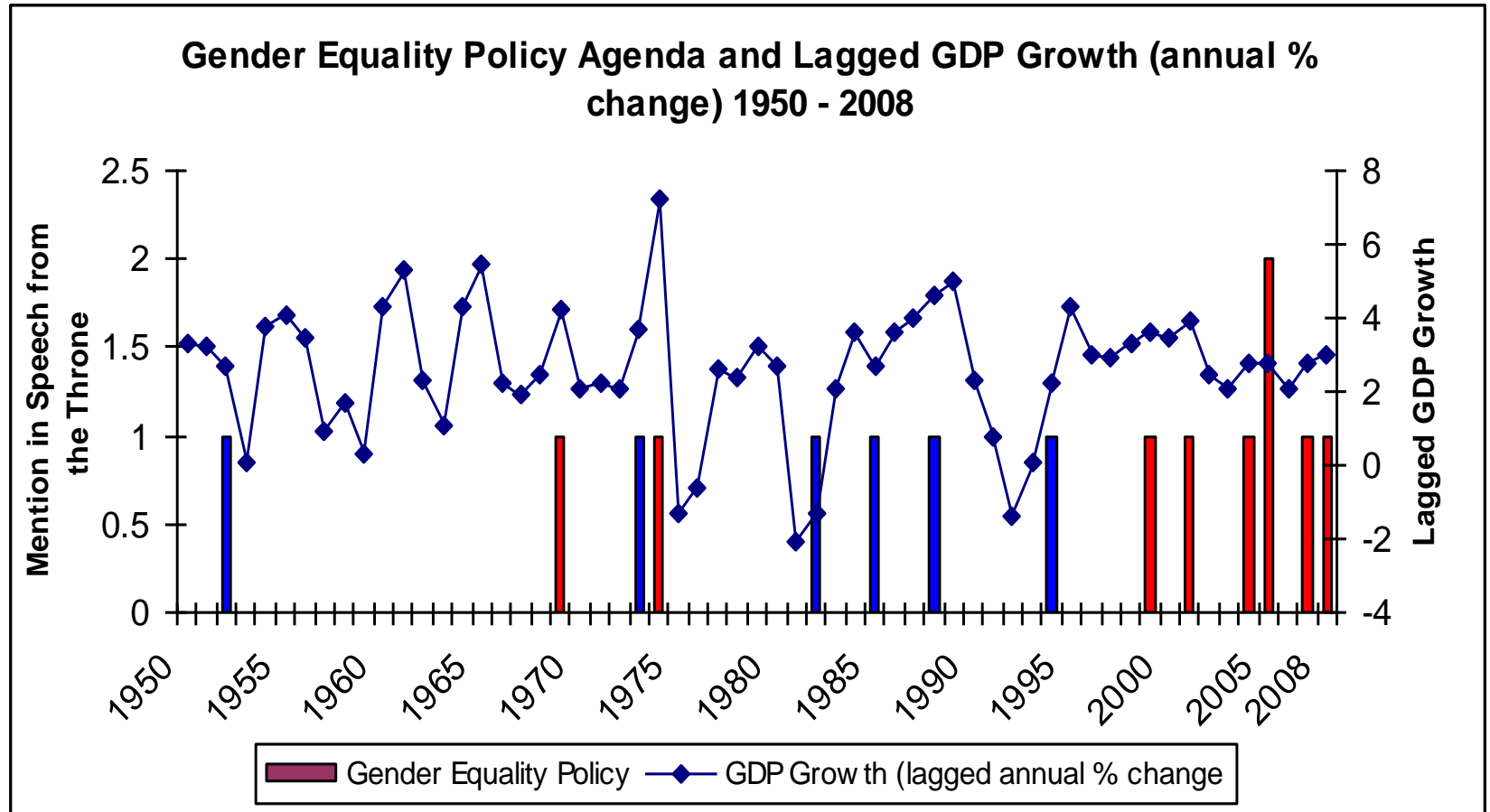
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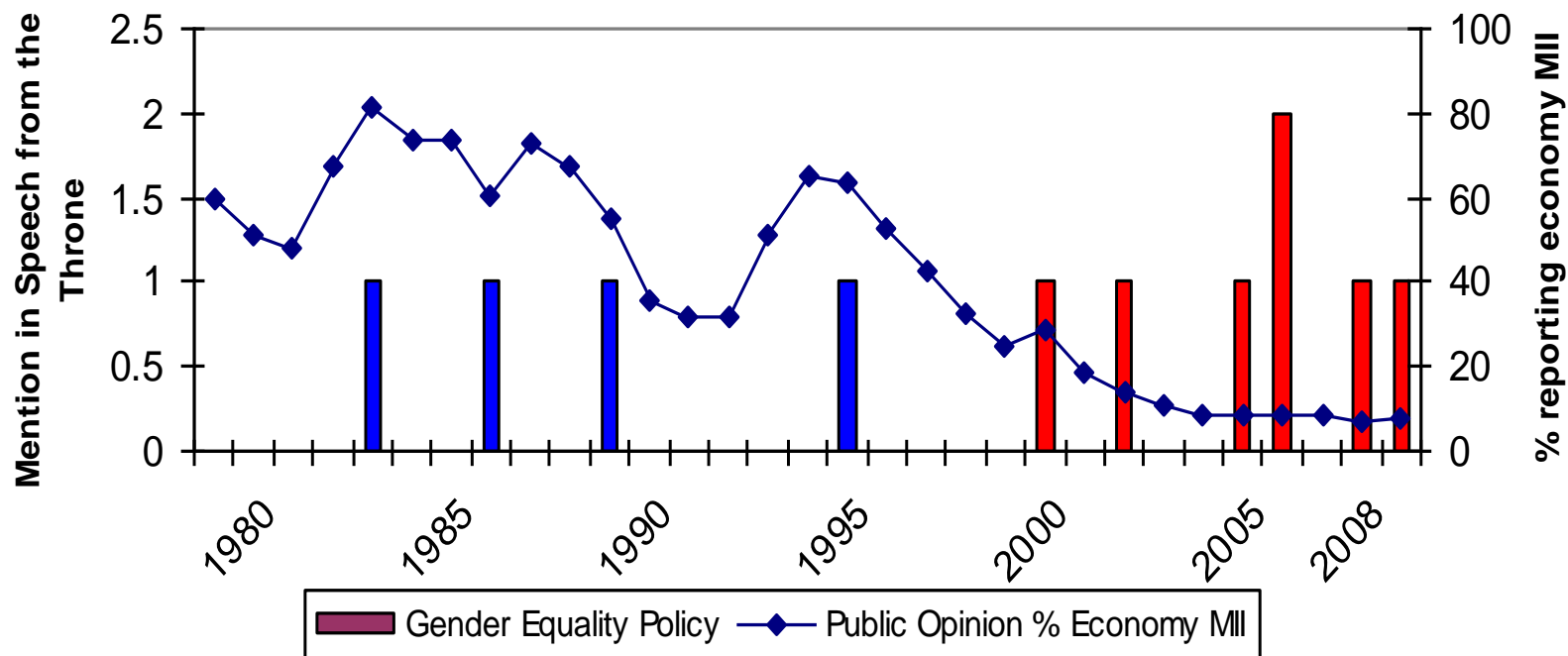
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Gender Equality Agenda and Lagged Public Opinion (% reporting economy as most important issue) 1978 - 2008



Tutorial plan

- Read Downs article and write a one paragraph summary (200 words)
- Look at the graph available in the content folder for this week (and in next slide)
- Try to describe in three short bullet points (50 words) what you think the graph tells you about :
 - 1 – Public concern for environmental matters
 - 2 – If governmental agendas responded to this concern
 - 3 – How helpful the theory of democratic responsiveness is when interpreting this graph?

Public concern about the environment and environmental policy mentions in 'UK Speech from the Throne'

(<http://policyagendasuk.wordpress.com/>)

Environment

