



**METROPOLITAN  
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# Event Focused Learning: What is it & How do we apply it to ARFF?



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# Introduction

- Background
  - Fire Service
  - Higher Education
- Objective





# References

- Birkland, T. (1997). After disaster: Agenda setting, public policy, and focusing events. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Birkland, T. (2006). Lessons of Disaster: Policy Change After Catastrophic Events. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Kingdon, J. (1995). Agendas, alternatives, and public policies (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: HarperCollins.
- Presentation slides from Dr. Rebecca Lutte, University of Nebraska at Omaha School of Public Affairs and Community Service.
- IFSTA Fire and Emergency Services Instructor, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition



# Learning In General

- How do we learn and more importantly how do we take a lesson or an event and apply it to our skill sets?

“

You don't get better at something by avoiding it, you get better at it by acknowledging it and coming up with a plan to work on it.

CAMERON MORRISSEY



# Psychology of Learning

- Learning Definition (IFSTA 6<sup>th</sup> Edition Fire and Emergency Services Instructor)– Relatively permanent change in behavior that results from acquiring new information, practicing skills, or developing attitudes following some form of instruction.



# Psychology of Learning

- Learning Processes include:
  - Teaching
  - Learning
  - Motivation
- Learning Domains:
  - Cognitive (knowledge)
  - Psychomotor (skills)
  - Affective (attitude)



# Switching Gears

- Public Policy & Learning through past events





# Switching Gears

- John Kingdon, Professor Emeritus
  - University of Michigan
  - Published the book “Agenda’s, alternatives and public policies in 1984
  - Kingdon looked at agenda setting as the first phase of the policy process
    - Why some topics gain attention and why some are neglected?
    - How are alternative solutions developed?



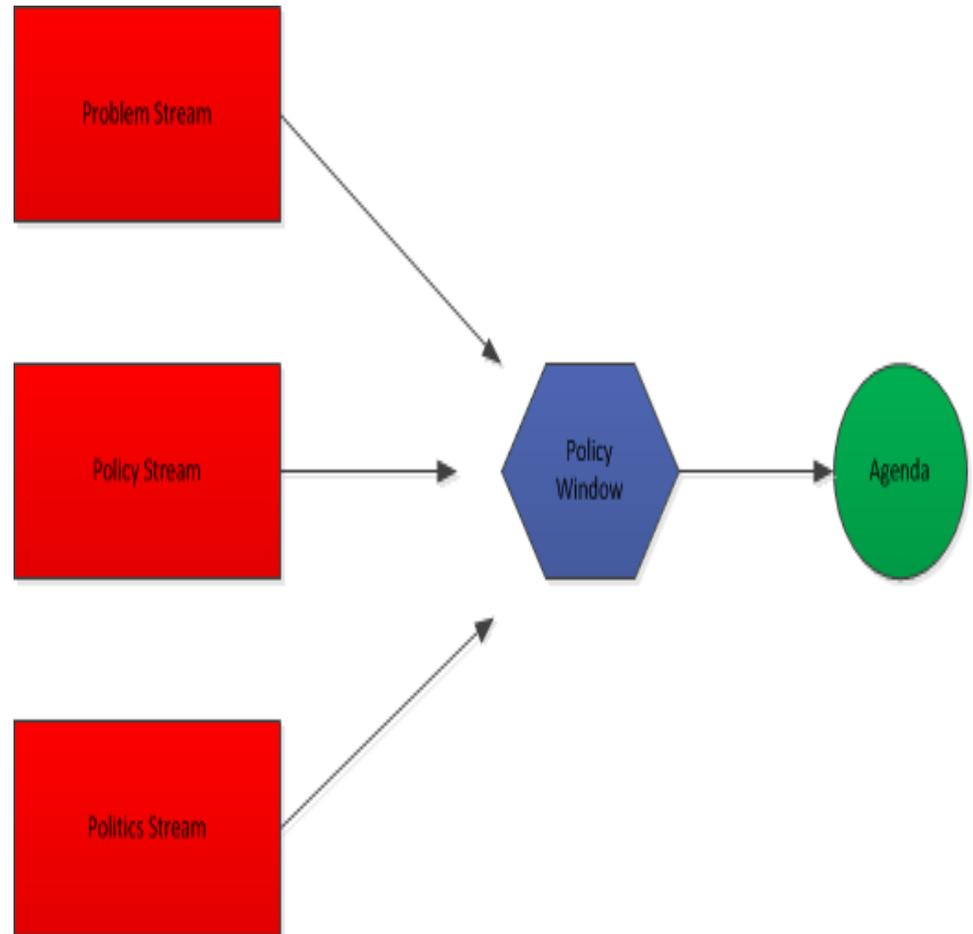
# Switching Gears

- Dr. Thomas A. Birkland
  - Professor at North Carolina State University
  - Research focus is on policy change respective to disasters and industrial accidents
  - Multiple publications:
    - 1997- After Disaster: Agenda setting, Public Policy & Focusing Events
    - 2006- Lessons of Disaster: Policy Change After Catastrophic Events (two events)



# Policy Streams

- Three streams:
  - Moving an issue onto the agenda involves three streams:
    - Problem Stream
    - Policy Stream
    - Politics Stream





# Problem Stream

- Recognition and definition of the problem is key
  - Different stakeholder groups will work to get policy makers to view the problem as they view the problem which will impact the alternatives explored as solutions
  - Belief that there is a need to do something about it
    - Violates important values
  - Policy community recognizes or learns about the problem via
    - Indicators
    - Event (disaster, crisis)
- “it is not the issue itself that matters so much as the public or elite understanding of the issue” (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993, p. 42)



# Politics Stream

- Political arena plays powerful role in agenda setting
- Politics stream influenced
  - Swings in national mood
  - Elections – new administration or shifts in legislature
  - Interest group pressure
- In politics stream, gain consensus through bargaining (vs. persuasion)
  - To rise on the agenda, political will must exist to address the issue



# Policy Stream

- Process of generating alternatives & debating solutions
  - “If you are going to bring a problem forward, make sure you have a solution”
- Policy primeval soup: many ideas floating around, often combination is made from the ideas
- Selection of policy alternative may be based on criteria such as
  - Technical feasibility
  - Congruence with values of the community
  - Potential future constraints
    - Budget
    - Public acceptability
    - Political acceptance
- Role of policy entrepreneurs



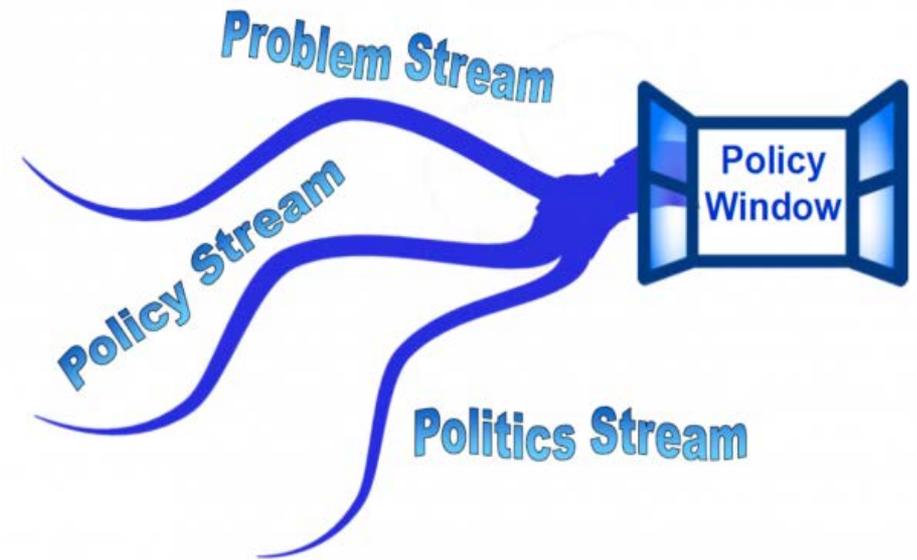
# Participants

- Visible: receive considerable press and public attention
  - President
  - High level presidential appointees
  - Prominent members of Congress
- Hidden: specialists
  - Academics
  - Career bureaucrats
  - Congressional staffers
  - Analysts
- Visible participants play greater role in getting an issue on the agenda while the hidden participants play greater role in specifying alternatives



# Coupling of the streams

- Three streams flow independently
- When all three streams come together, the issue is likely to be on the agenda of decision makers





# Policy Window

- Window of opportunity to push a solution or call attention to a problem
- Window of opportunity may be short lived
- How windows open
  - Elections (predictable)
  - Occurrence such as a focusing event (unpredictable)
- Sometimes one stream lies stagnant, in wait for such an opportunity
  - Example a policy proposal spearheaded by a policy community exists but must wait until the problem comes along to open the window of opportunity or until the political landscape changes
- Window presents an opportunity for all three streams to come together



# Focusing event

- Concept introduced by Kingdon and further defined by Birkland
- Focusing event defined as: rare, harmful, sudden event that becomes known to the mass public and policy elites virtually simultaneously (Birkland, 1997, P. 3)
- Can elevate an issue in an instant and throw open a policy window
  - Size: Birkland argues the larger the disaster, the greater the potential influence
- Key to policy change is mobilization of the apathetic (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993, p. 21)



# Focusing event

- Event related policy change- policy change that can be plausibly linked to a particular event (Birkland p.2).
- Blame fixing- key feature how is the problem perceived or defined
  - The larger the disaster, the larger influence it can have on policy change
  - May be based upon opinion or fact
  - Aviation industry is prone to disaster–
    - More sensitive to change;
    - Little attention until after a focusing event;
    - Events are infrequent (low prob./high frequency)

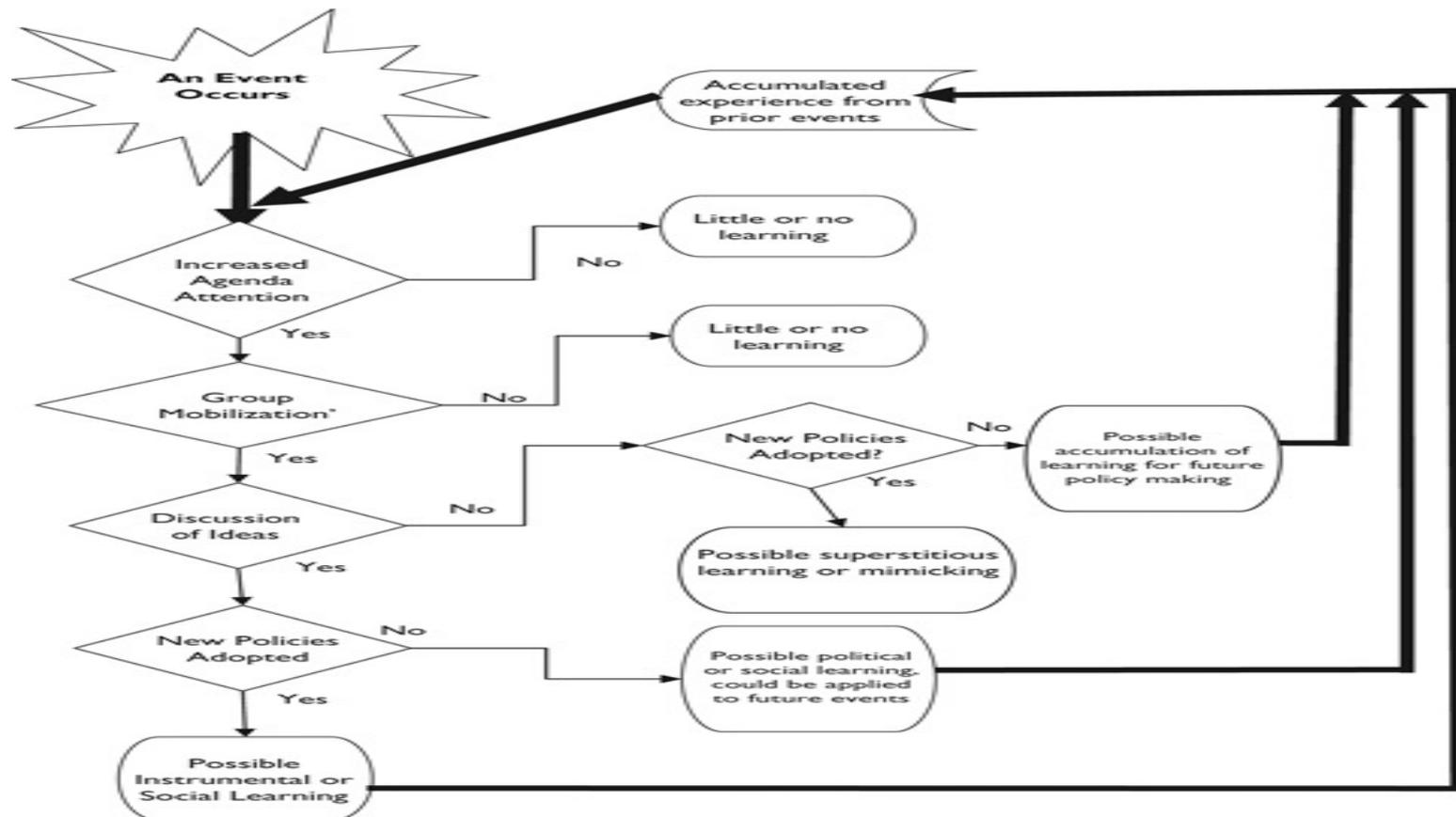


# Event Focused Learning

- Birkland defined learned as “a process in which individuals apply new information and ideas, or information and ideas elevated on the agenda by a recent event, to policy decisions” (Birkland, p.22)



# Event Related Policy Change





# Learning from Events

- As we learn, our beliefs may be altered or changed (bounded by ration & limits);
- Ultimate goal of learning is to effect change— both with our organizations but also at higher levels;
- Policy failure— many of our events come from this mode of learning (instrumental, social & political learning can take place in policy failure)
- Based upon what we are learning, are we affecting the change? How do we measure it?



# Event Focused Learning

- What lessons have we learned from previous industry related events AND what policies have changed?
  - Las Vegas & Fort Lauderdale
  - San Francisco
  - Buffalo
  - Philadelphia



# Application

- How does this apply to our industry?
- The want and desire for change for issues in our industry (name the issue);
- Looking at issues and challenges from the various altitudes that we work within



# Closing

 Fully Involved  
September 6 at 5:43pm · 🌐

Write your own ending.



# WINNING

DOESN'T COME FROM WANT,  
IT COMES FROM PREPARATION

 Fully Involved  
2200 F

"Our department makes 1,120 calls every day. Do you know how many of those calls the public expects perfection on? 1,120. Nobody calls the fire department and says, 'Send me two dumb-ass firemen in a pickup truck'. In three minutes they want five brain-surgeon decathlon champions to come out and solve all their problems."

-Chief John Eversole  
Chicago Fire Dept.