

OFFICIAL ACTORS IN THE POLICY PROCESS

THEORIES OF INTERACTION

POSC 315: WEEK 4-2/H3>

THEORETICAL APPROACHES

Three main frameworks for understanding policy actors:

1. Institutionalism
2. Behavioralism
3. Neo-Institutionalism

INSTITUTIONALISM

- Studies politics and policy through formal institutional interactions
- Focuses on formal rules and procedures
- Emphasizes relationships between institutions

BEHAVIORALISM

- Focuses on individual political motivation and behavior
- Analyzes incentives and disincentives
- Examines relationships between individuals and groups

NEO-INSTITUTIONALISM

- Synthesizes institutional and behavioral approaches
- Examines sociological aspects of institutions
- Studies how institutions shape behavior
- Applies rational choice theory to institutional analysis

KEY CONCEPTS

INERTIA

The tendency of an object (or institution) to resist changes to its current state

INSTITUTIONAL CONCEPTS

- **Path Dependency:** Historical decisions shape current options
- **Incrementalism:** Change occurs in small steps
- **Punctuated Equilibrium:** Long periods of stability interrupted by rapid change

TYPES OF POLICY ACTORS

OFFICIAL ACTORS

Formally recognized participants in the policy process

- Legislators
- Executive
- Bureaucrats
- Judges

LEGISLATORS

CORE FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Primary lawmaking body in democratic systems
- Constitutional authority to create, amend, and repeal laws
- Oversight of executive branch activities
- Budget and appropriations authority

LEGISLATIVE DYNAMICS

KEY MOTIVATIONS

- Re-election goals drive many decisions
- Constituent service and representation
- Policy achievement in priority areas
- Institutional power and influence

LEGISLATIVE CONSTRAINTS

- Procedural Requirements:
 - Committee system
 - Parliamentary rules
 - Voting procedures
 - Bicameral negotiations

POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS

- Party leadership directives
- Coalition management
- Interest group pressure
- Electoral consequences

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES

- Bill Introduction and Sponsorship:
 - Research and drafting
 - Coalition building
 - Stakeholder engagement

COMMITTEE WORK

- Hearings and investigations
- Expert testimony
- Mark-up sessions

CONSTITUENT SERVICES

- Casework management
- District outreach
- Community engagement

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

CORE FUNCTIONS AND POWERS

- Law Execution and Administration
- Policy Leadership:

Function

Agenda setting

Policy proposals

Crisis management

EXECUTIVE POLICY TOOLS

DIRECT POLICY INSTRUMENTS

- Executive Orders
- Executive Memoranda
- Proclamations
- Signing Statements
- Veto Power

EXECUTIVE INFLUENCE

- Agenda Setting Power:
 - Public attention direction
 - Media relations
 - Crisis framing
- Bureaucratic Oversight:
 - Agency direction

BUREAUCRACY

IMPLEMENTATION ROLE

- Policy Implementation
- Regulation Development
- Program Administration
- Service Delivery

BUREAUCRATIC STRUCTURE

- Hierarchical Organization:
 - Clear chain of command
 - Specialized divisions
 - Standard operating procedures
- Personnel Systems:
 - Merit-based hiring

STREET-LEVEL BUREAUCRATS

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Direct public interaction
- Discretionary authority
- Resource constraints
- Complex decision-making

BUREAUCRATIC POWER

- Technical Expertise:
 - Specialized knowledge
 - Program experience
 - Policy implementation insights
- Administrative Authority:
 - Rulemaking power

JUDICIARY

CONSTITUTIONAL ROLE

- Constitutional Interpretation
- Legal Dispute Resolution
- Rights Protection
- Government Oversight

JUDICIAL POWERS

KEY AUTHORITIES

- Judicial Review:
 - Constitutional analysis
 - Statutory interpretation
 - Administrative review
- Jurisdictional Authority:

POLICY IMPACT

- Direct Policy Effects:
 - Constitutional rulings
 - Statutory interpretation
 - Administrative oversight
- Indirect Influence:
 - Agenda setting

JUDICIAL CONSTRAINTS

- Institutional Limitations:
 - Case or controversy requirement
 - Standing doctrine
 - Precedent considerations
- External Constraints:
 - Implementation dependence

POLICY PROCESS INTEGRATION

ACTOR INTERACTIONS

- Checks and balances system
- Institutional interdependence
- Policy feedback loops
- Conflict resolution mechanisms

LOOKING AHEAD

Next Session: Unofficial Actors in the Policy Process

- Interest Groups
- Media
- Think Tanks
- Advocacy Organizations