UNOFFICIAL ACTORS IN THE POLICY PROCESS

ACTOR INTERACTION

POSC 315: WEEK 4-2

OVERVIEW

- Unofficial Actors

  - News Media

  - Political Parties

  - Interest Groups

  - Think Tanks

  - Corporations

  - Individuals

THE NEWS MEDIA

> *"Politicians and the news media create a world of political fictions by developing causal stories that determine to whom and to where or to what blame is affixed." - Deborah Stone*

MEDIA FRAMING

KEY CONCEPTS

- Frame definition: "The process by which a communication source defines and constructs a political issue or public controversy"

- Impact on public perception

- Example: "Immigrant Caravan" vs. "Refugee Caravan"

MEDIA GATEKEEPING

- Control over story selection

  - Editorial decisions

  - Story placement

  - Coverage duration

- Impact on policy windows

  - Creating opportunities

  - Sustaining attention

MODERN MEDIA DYNAMICS

- Evolution of Media Landscape

    - Traditional vs. Digital platforms

    - Social media impact

    - 24-hour news cycle

- Challenges

    - Decreasing attention spans

    - Information overload

PACK JOURNALISM

"The tendency of journalists to cover the same stories in the same way because they are competing with each other for audience attention."

- Creates story momentum

- Reinforces narrative frames

- Can lead to groupthink

POLITICAL PARTIES

Unique characteristics:

- Not mentioned in Constitution

- Created by politicians

- Essential for ballot access

PARTY FUNCTIONS

- Coordination Functions

    - Coordinate actions

    - Communicate with voters

    - Raise money

    - Recruit candidates

    - Mobilize voters

    - Organize government

MODERN PARTY DYNAMICS

- Polarization Effects

    - Increased ideological sorting

    - Gridlock challenges

    - Partisan policy formation

- Institutional Changes

    - Primary system evolution

    - Campaign finance role

PARTY REALIGNMENT

HISTORICAL EXAMPLES

- The New Deal Coalition

- Southern Strategy

- Reagan Revolution

INTEREST GROUPS

CORE DEFINITIONS

- "An organization that tries to influence public policy decisions." - Stone

- "A collection of individuals who share a common interest or attitude and seek to influence government for specific ends." - Lowi

INTEREST GROUP TYPES

- Institutional Groups

  - National Governors Association

  - National League of Cities

  - National Association of Counties

- Economic Groups

  - National Association of Manufacturers

  - American Petroleum Institute

MODERN INTEREST GROUP STRATEGIES

DIGITAL AGE TACTICS

- Social Media Campaigns

    - Viral advocacy

    - Online mobilization

    - Digital grassroots

INTEREST GROUP ACTIVITIES

- Direct Activities

  - Lobbying

  - Campaign contributions

  - Litigation

  - Venue shopping

- Indirect Activities

  - Public relations

ASTROTURFING

MODERN EXAMPLES

- Definition: Creating artificial grassroots movements

- Current Examples:

    - Industry-funded citizen groups

    - Corporate-sponsored local movements

    - Social media manipulation campaigns

THINK TANKS

Research and advocacy organizations focusing on:

- Policy research

- Analysis

- Recommendations

- Public education

THINK TANK CATEGORIES

- Academic Think Tanks

    - Brookings Institution

    - RAND Corporation

- Advocacy Think Tanks

    - Heritage Foundation

    - Center for American Progress

- Contract Research Organizations

THINK TANK INFLUENCE

- Policy Research

  - Data analysis

  - Policy evaluation

  - Impact assessment

- Knowledge Translation

  - Policy briefs

  - Media engagement

THINK TANK FUNDING

FUNDING SOURCES

- Private Donors

- Foundations

- Corporations

- Government Contracts

- Endowments

CORPORATIONS AND BUSINESS

POLICY PROCESS ROLE

- Direct policy influence

- Economic stakeholders

- Implementation partners

- Resource providers

CORPORATE POLICY TOOLS

- Direct Influence

  - Lobbying

  - Campaign contributions

  - Policy research funding

- Indirect Influence

  - Industry associations

  - Public-private partnerships

CORPORATE POLICY IMPACT

KEY AREAS OF INFLUENCE

- Regulatory Policy

    - Industry standards

    - Compliance frameworks

    - Environmental regulations

- Economic Policy

INTERACTION OF ACTORS

- **Policy Domain**

  - "A substantive area of public policy such as health care, education, or the environment." - Stone

    - A policy domain can be a single policy or a group of related policies

    - an area where actors compete and compromise

INTERACTION OF ACTORS

- **Policy Community**

  - The group of actors who are involved in a particular policy domain.

INTERACTION OF ACTORS

- **Subgovernment**

  - "A network of groups within the American political system that exercise a great deal of control over specific policy areas." - Stone

  - An *issue network* is a more open version of a subgovernment.

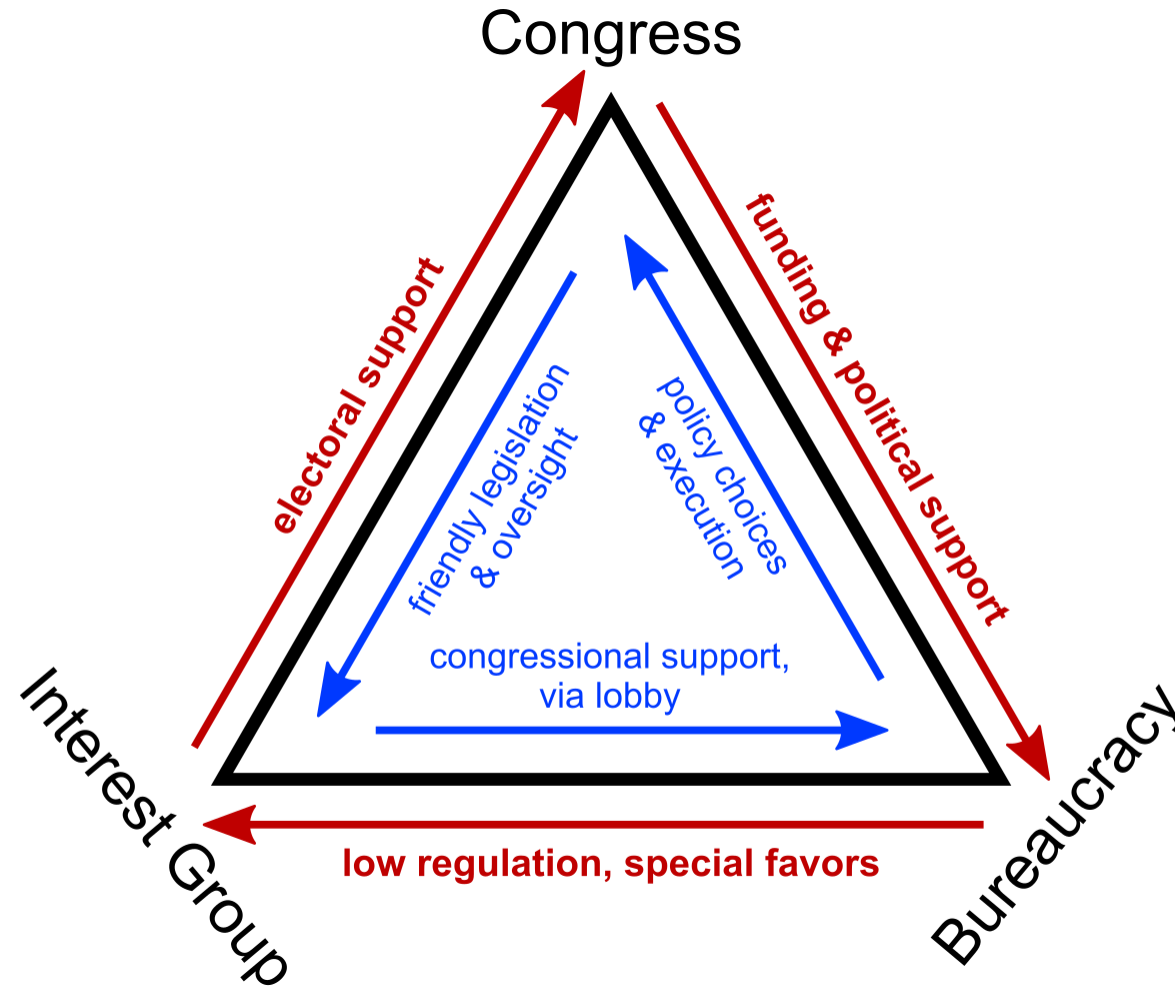 - Open to numerous actors, interest groups, think

INTERACTION OF ACTORS

- **Iron Triangle**

    - "A stable, mutually beneficial political relationship among a congressional committee (or subcommittee), an administrative agency, and organized interests concerned with a particular policy domain." - Stone

        - Example: The House Committee on Energy and Commerce, the EPA, and the American

IRON TRIANGLE

Congress

Interest Group

Bureaucracy

electoral support

funding & political support

friendly legislation & oversight

policy choices & execution

congressional support, via lobby

low regulation, special favors

INTERACTION OF ACTORS

- **Policy Regime**

    - "A loosely formed governance structure formed by a policy community around a particularly broad policy domain." - Birkland

- ▪ When a policy domain is broad and spans boundaries of various types, the actors, coalitions, interests, and agencies form a policy regime—a loose governance structure.

CONCLUSION

- Unofficial actors play critical roles in the policy process

- Understanding their interactions is essential for policy analysis

- Media, parties, interest groups, think tanks, corporations, and individuals shape policy outcomes

- Complex dynamics and power structures influence policy decisions

NEXT TIME

- Individuals in the Policy Process

- King's *Letter from the Birmingham Jail*