

# **Actor Interaction for Policy Change**

POSC 315 - Introduction to Public Policy

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- **Topics:**
  - Understanding Policy Actors
  - Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF)
  - Lindblom's Incrementalism
  - Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET)
  - Kingdon's Three Streams and Policy Windows

# Understanding Policy Actors

- **Who are Policy Actors?**
  - Individuals and groups involved in the policymaking process
- **Types of Actors:**
  - Government officials
  - Interest groups
  - Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
  - Citizens and stakeholders
- **Importance:**
  - Their interactions shape policy outcomes

# Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF)

- **Key Concepts:**

- Focuses on the interaction of actors within policy subsystems
- Actors form coalitions based on shared beliefs and interests
- Coalitions compete to influence policy over time

- **Components:**

- **Deep Core Beliefs:** Fundamental worldviews
- **Policy Core Beliefs:** Domain-specific policy preferences
- **Secondary Aspects:** Specific policy positions and strategies

## ACF Example - Climate Change Policy

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### Pro-mitigation Coalition

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- Environmental NGOs
  - Climate scientists
  - Renewable energy companies
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### Economic Prioritization Coalition

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- Fossil fuel industry
  - Some labor unions
  - Certain policymakers
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### Core Belief

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- Urgent action needed to address climate change (Pro-mitigation)
  - Economic growth should not be sacrificed for climate action (Economic Prioritization)
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**Outcome:** Policies reflect the balance of power between coalitions (e.g., Paris Agreement implementation)

# Lindblom's Incrementalism

- **Key Concepts:**

- Proposed by Charles Lindblom
- Policy changes occur gradually through small adjustments
- Decision-makers “muddle through” rather than make radical changes

- **Characteristics:**

- Limited analysis of alternatives
- Focus on practical solutions over ideal ones

# Incrementalism Example - Minimum Wage Policy

## Initial State:

- Federal minimum wage at \$7.25/hour

## Incremental Changes:

1. **Year 1:** Increase to \$8.00/hour
2. **Year 3:** Increase to \$9.00/hour
3. **Year 5:** Increase to \$10.00/hour

## Rationale:

- Allows businesses to adapt gradually
- Reduces political opposition
- Provides opportunities for assessment and adjustment

# Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET)

- **Key Concepts:**

- Policy change occurs in significant leaps after periods of stability
- Long periods of incremental change are interrupted by sudden shifts

- **Mechanisms:**

- **Policy Monopolies:** Established interests maintaining status quo
- **Triggering Events:** Crises or shifts in public opinion disrupting equilibrium



- **Financial Regulation:**
  - **Stability Period:**
    - Minimal regulatory changes before 2008
  - **Triggering Event:**
    - Global financial crisis of 2008
  - **Policy Shift:**
    - Rapid enactment of new regulations like the Dodd-Frank Act

# Kingdon's Three Streams and Policy Windows

- **Key Concepts:**
  - Policy change occurs when three streams converge:
    - **Problem Stream:** Recognition of issues needing attention
    - **Policy Stream:** Potential solutions available
    - **Politics Stream:** Political climate and public mood
  - **Policy Window:**
    - Opportunity for change when streams align
- **Role of Policy Entrepreneurs:**
  - Individuals who promote policy changes by coupling streams

# Kingdon's Model Example - Telehealth Policy

- **Problem Stream:**
  - Rural healthcare access issues
  - Rising healthcare costs
- **Policy Stream:**
  - Advances in telemedicine technology
  - Proposals for insurance coverage of telehealth services
- **Politics Stream:**
  - COVID-19 pandemic highlighting healthcare access issues
  - Bipartisan support for telehealth expansion
- **Policy Window:**
  - Rapid adoption of telehealth policies during pandemic
  - Permanent expansion of Medicare telehealth coverage
- **Policy Entrepreneurs:** Advocates for telehealth expansion

- **Summary of Theories:**
  - **ACF:** Coalitions based on shared beliefs influence policy
  - **Incrementalism:** Policy evolves through small, manageable steps
  - **PET:** Significant changes follow long periods of stability
  - **Kingdon's Model:** Policy change when problem, policy, and politics align
- **Importance:**
  - Understanding these theories aids in analyzing and influencing policy processes

- **Open Discussion:**

- How do these theories apply to current policy debates?
- Can you identify examples from recent news?

- **Questions:**

- What connections did you make between the theories?
- Which theory do you find most applicable to real-world policy changes or changes in your term paper topic?