P145 / Advocacy Coalitions and Policy Outputs/Outcomes

Topic : Policy Process Theories

Chair : Wei Li (Huazhong University of Science and Technology)

Second Chair : Tim Heinmiller (Department of Political Science, Brock University)

Third Chair : Allegra Fullerton (West Virginia University)

Fourth Chair : Holly Peterson (Louisiana State University)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

This panel calls for papers related to advocacy coalitions, policy processes and policy outputs/outcomes, including both policy change and policy stability. Particular topics of interest are collective advocacy, coalition opportunity structures, policy venues, and policy learning, with broad focus on their influence on policy outputs/outcomes.

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) literature is relevant to a puzzling modern phenomenon: in the age of generative AI and wide access to social media, expanded information availability does not necessarily empower resource-constrained communities. Instead, belief and affective polarization alongside institutional and social distrust persist, with important implications for policy development (Jenke 2024?Algan et al. 2025; White and Shah 2025?Van Prooijen et al. 2021). At the same time, on policy issues involving different social identities and philosophical worldviews, opposing coalitions can share deep-core beliefs, implying opportunities for policy learning (Crawford & Weible, 2024).

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) literature on policy advocacy, learning and change has examined the dynamics of conflicts within policy subsystems shaped by cognitive, psychological, political and emotional use of information and resources (Sabatier, 1987; Heintz,Jr. and Jenkins-Smith 1988; Leach and Sabatier 2005; Fullerton et al. 2024). Cross-country comparative scholarship within this tradition has yielded fruitful findings and continues to advance: the assumptions, hypotheses and theories of the framework have been tested and revised across diverse institutional and issue contexts (Weible and Sabatier 2009; Jonathan et al. 2017; Nohrstedt et al. 2023; Li and Weible 2021). Still, empirical research on the conditions affecting learning, intra?coalition and inter?coalition dynamics is an ongoing project.

This panel proposes that, by studying the effects of collective participation, voices and learning on policy changes, and the contextual and contingent factors mediating these processes, Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) research holds substantial explanatory potential to inform solutions to challenging policy issues.

References:

Algan, Yann, Corin Blanc and Claudia Senik (2025) Trusting Others: How unhappiness and social distrust explain populism? World Happiness Report.

Crawford, Anna M., Christopher M. Weible. (2024) The Political Polarization over abortion: An analysis of advocacy coalition belief systems. Policy Sciences, 57: 599-620.

Sabatier, Paul (1987) Knowledge, Policy-Oriented Learning and Policy Change: An Advocacy Coalition Framework. Science Communication, 8:649.

Fullerton, Allegra H., Kayla M. Gabehart and Christopher M. Weible. (2024) Emotional Expressions and Advocacy Coalitions. International Review of Public Policy, 6(1):5-22.

Gabehart, Kayla, Aerang Nam and Christopher M. Weible (2022) Lessons from the Advocacy Coalition. Framework for climate change policy and politics. Npj Climate Action. 13.

Heintz Jr., H. Theodore and Hank C. Jenkins-Smith. (1988) Advocacy Coalitions and the Practice of Policy Analysis. Policy Sciences, 21: 263-277.

Leach, William D and Paul A. Sabatier. (2005) To Trust an Adversary: Integrating Rational and

Psychological Models of Collaborative Policymaking. American Political Science Review, 99(4):492-503.

Pierce, Jonathan J., Holly L. Peterson, Michael D. Jones, Samantha P. Garrard and Theresa Vu. (2017) There and Back Again: A Tale of the Advocacy Coalition Framework. The Policy Studies Journal.45(S1):S13-S46.

Weible, Christopher M. and Paul A. Sabatier (2009) Coalitions, Science,and Belief Change: Comparing Adversarial and Collaborative Policy Subsystems. The Policy Studies Journal, 37(2): 195-212.

Weible, Christopher M., Karin Ingold, Daniel Nohrstedt, Adam Douglas Henry and Hank C. Jenkins-Smith (2019) Sharpening Advocacy Coalitions. Policy Studies Journal.

Weible, Christopher M., Anna M. Crawford, Allegra H. Fullerton, Kayla M. Gabehart, Katherine E. Imhoff and Giulia Mariani (2025) Deep core advocacy coalitions. Policy and Society, 44(2):184-199.

Nohrstedt, Daniel, Karin Ingold, Christopher M. Weible, Elizabeth A. Koebele, Kristin L. Olofsson, Keiichi Satoh and Hank C. Jenkins-Smith (2023) The Advocacy Coalition Framework-Progress and Emerging Areas. In Christopher M. Weible(Ed.) Theories of the Policy Process. Pp. 130-160.

Van Prooijen, Jan-Willem, Giuliana Spadaro and Haiyan Wang (2022) Suspicion of institutions: How distrust and conspiracy theories deteriorate social relationships. Current Opinion in Psychology, 43:65-69.

Jenke, Libby (2024) Affective Polarization and Misinformation Belief. Political Behavior, 46: 825-884.

CALL FOR PAPERS

This panel calls for papers related to but not confined to the following questions and topics:

1. How do coalition opportunity structures shape the learning and negotiation opportunities technological innovations bring to the policy subsystem actors and the broader public? Who are the agents who facilitate the learning and negotiation processes? What strategies (such as venue-shopping) do these agents adopt to reshape the distribution of resources and power within and across coalitions?

2. To deliver policy change that involves high level of epistemic uncertainty, what instrument mixes can governing coalitions deploy to strengthen implementation capacity and achieve intended outcome, namely addressing the problems targeted by the policy change?

3. What advocacy strategies do coalitions employ to mainstream their core technological solutions? Do they prioritize public outreach over engaging the powerful institutional actors?

4. To what extent does the variation of political and social trust at the system level affect the knowledge sharing, accumulation and learning within policy subsystems?

5. How do the competition and collaboration for financial and political resources between various coalition members and coalitions affect the intra- and inter-coalition dynamics and associated policy output?Weible and Sabatier 2009; Weible et al. 2019)?

6. How do deep-core and policy-core belief structures shape intra-coalition differences, as well as inter-coalition consensus and learning (particularly on issues involving identity and political polarization, Crawford & Weible, 2024; Weible et al. 2025)? What insights can comparative cross-context ACF research bring for under-studied institutional and geographical settings (Gabehart et al., 2022)?

The panel welcomes contributions employing various approaches, including synthetic reviews and critical discussions of existing theories and methodological challenges, new theories, analytical frameworks and methodological designs (e.g. measurement issues) developed from secondary literature, as well as empirical research applying and developing theories, particularly those addressing significant real-world issues using quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods.

References:

Crawford, Anna M., Christopher M. Weible. (2024) The Political Polarization over abortion: An analysis of advocacy coalition belief systems. Policy Sciences, 57: 599-620.

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