

## Policy Entrepreneurship and Policy Change

Michael Mintrom and Phillipa Norman

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*This article reviews the concept of policy entrepreneurship and its use in explaining policy change. Although the activities of policy entrepreneurs have received close attention in several studies, the concept of policy entrepreneurship is yet to be broadly integrated within analyses of policy change. To facilitate more integration of the concept, we here show how policy entrepreneurship can be understood within more encompassing theorizations of policy change: incrementalism, policy streams, institutionalism, punctuated equilibrium, and advocacy coalitions. Recent applications of policy entrepreneurship as a key explanation of policy change are presented as models for future work. Room exists for further conceptual development and empirical testing concerning policy entrepreneurship. Such work could be undertaken in studies of contemporary and historical policy change.*

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Scholars of public policy often seek to explain how particular policy ideas catch on. The dynamics of policy change have been theorized and explored empirically from a range of perspectives during the past few decades. In these investigations, the role played by specific advocates of policy change has been frequently noted. Highly motivated individuals or small teams can do much to draw attention to policy problems, present innovative policy solutions, build coalitions of supporters, and secure legislative action. Of course, no political activity or policy initiative can go anywhere without many actors getting involved. The question then arises: By what means can advocates of policy change come to have broad influence? Several policy scholars have argued that such advocates achieve success because they exhibit a high degree of entrepreneurial flare. According to this line of argument, by closely observing the practices of advocates of policy change, we can come to appreciate how they perform a function in the policy process equivalent to entrepreneurs in the business context. Following an emerging convention, we here define such advocates of policy change as *policy entrepreneurs*.

This article foregrounds policy entrepreneurship as an explanation of policy change. While the activities of policy entrepreneurs have received close attention in several studies (Crowley, 2003; Kingdon, 1984/1995; Mintrom, 2000; Roberts & King, 1991; Weissert, 1991), the concept of policy entrepreneurship is yet to be broadly integrated within studies of policy change. We contend that new applica-

tions of the concept of policy entrepreneurship could yield many insights into the politics of policymaking. Those new applications could be made in both studies of contemporary policy change and historical studies. In trying to account for the somewhat limited use made to date of the concept of policy entrepreneurship, we note a weakness in prior theoretical work. That is, previous discussions that have highlighted the work of policy entrepreneurs have rarely considered the fit between the concept of policy entrepreneurship and broader, more encompassing theorizations of policy change. We show how that weakness in past accounts can be rectified. Indeed, the concept of policy entrepreneurship fits well with other explanations of policy change, and deserves a place in the mainstream of policy studies.

This review proceeds in three steps. First, we explore the concept of the policy entrepreneur. In so doing, we explain how this concept differs from others that have been used to label actors in the policymaking process. Following this, we examine the fit of the concept with established theories of policy change. These theories include Lindblom's (1968) work on incrementalism, Kingdon's (1984/1995) work on policy streams, March and Olsen's (1989) work on institutionalism, Baumgartner and Jones' (1993) work on punctuated equilibrium in policy communities, and Sabatier's (1988) work on advocacy coalitions. Finally, we note recent uses of policy entrepreneurship as a key explanation of policy change. We discuss how these applications could serve as models for studies of policy change in other areas. We also suggest directions for future research on policy entrepreneurship.

While the concept of policy entrepreneurship could be applied more widely than has been the case to date, indiscriminate application must be avoided. Just as entrepreneurs cannot be blamed or credited for all changes that occur in the business realm, we should not assume that policy change is always and everywhere driven by policy entrepreneurship. The extant literature suggests that policy entrepreneurship is most likely to be observed in cases where change involves disruption to established ways of doing things. Public policies are designed and implemented to address particular problems. Incremental changes are then made to those policies as new challenges arise. However, instances occur when new challenges appear so significant that established systems of managing them are judged inadequate. A key part of policy entrepreneurship involves seizing such moments to promote major change. Such action requires creativity, energy, and political skill.

### **Elements of Policy Entrepreneurship**

Many actors and organizations participate in policymaking or seek to influence decision makers. Most of these participants are comfortable working within established institutional arrangements; doing their bit to achieve improved outcomes for themselves and their supporters without upsetting the status quo. Policy entrepreneurs distinguish themselves through their desire to significantly change current ways of doing things in their area of interest.<sup>1</sup>

In his pioneering use of the term, Kingdon (1984/1995) noted that policy entrepreneurs “. . . could be in or out of government, in elected or appointed positions, in interest groups or research organizations. But their defining characteristic, much as in the case of a business entrepreneur, is their willingness to invest their resources—time, energy, reputation, and sometimes money—in the hope of a future return” (p. 122). Discussions of policy entrepreneurship have evolved over time, from instances where the term was used as a loose metaphor, to more sophisticated treatments. Ironically, the early emphasis on the individual as change agent appears to have served as an inhibitor to theorization. In any given instance of policy change, it is usually possible to locate an individual or a small team that appears to have been a driving force for action. But in all such cases, the individuals, their motives, and their ways of acting will appear idiosyncratic. And idiosyncrasy does not offer propitious grounds for theorization. To break this theoretical impasse, policy entrepreneurship needed to be studied in a manner that paid attention simultaneously to contextual factors, to individual actions within those contexts, and to how context shaped such actions.

In their analysis of change agents in local government, Schneider, Teske, and Mintrom (1995) offered a model for understanding the emergence and practices of entrepreneurial actors, given specific contexts. Applying a similar methodology, and combining it with event history analysis, Mintrom (1997a) showed how policy entrepreneurship could be studied systematically. That work, and subsequent studies (Mintrom, 2000; Mintrom & Vergari, 1998), demonstrated that the likelihood of policy change is affected by key contextual variables and by what policy entrepreneurs do within those contexts. When a range of contextual factors indicated that legislative change was likely to happen, the actions of policy entrepreneurs did not seem to have major impacts. However, in cases where contextual variables appeared to reduce the likelihood of change occurring, the actions of effective policy entrepreneurs could be decisive. Working with different sets of policy issues and different sets of policymaking contexts, Balla (2001) and Shipan and Volden (2006) reported similar findings.

Policy entrepreneurs can be identified by their efforts to promote significant policy change. Their motivations might be diverse. However, given their goal of promoting change, their actions should follow certain patterns. What does policy entrepreneurship involve? Following others, particularly Kingdon (1984/1995), Mintrom (2000), and Roberts and King (1996), we suggest that four elements are central to policy entrepreneurship. These are: displaying social acuity, defining problems, building teams, and leading by example.<sup>2</sup> We next review each element in turn, noting linkages between their discussion by those who have studied policy entrepreneurs and relevant discussions in the broader literature on policymaking and policy change. In this discussion, we do not rank the relative importance of each element. Our expectation is that all policy entrepreneurs exhibit these characteristics at least to some degree. Some policy entrepreneurs will be stronger in some of these characteristics than others. For example, Mintrom observed that some policy entrepreneurs were more effective than others at operating in networks (which relates to social acuity) and promoting and maintaining advocacy coalitions (which relates to team building).

### *Displaying Social Acuity*

Kingdon (1984/1995) argued that within policymaking contexts, policy entrepreneurs take advantage of “windows of opportunity” to promote policy change. The metaphor holds appeal, and empirical evidence indicates the importance of context for shaping the prospects of success for advocates of policy change. However, in policymaking contexts, as in all areas of human endeavor, opportunities must be recognized before they can be seized and used to pursue desired outcomes. This suggests change agents must display high levels of social acuity, or perceptiveness, in understanding others and engaging in policy conversations.

Empirical evidence indicates that policy entrepreneurs display social acuity in two key ways. First, they make good use of policy networks. Stretching back to Mohr’s (1969) studies of organizational innovation and Walker’s (1969) studies of the spread of policy innovations, we find that those actors most able to promote change in specific contexts have typically acquired relevant knowledge from elsewhere. Balla (2001), Mintrom and Vergari (1998), and True and Mintrom (2001) have demonstrated that engagement in relevant policy networks spanning across jurisdictions can significantly increase the likelihood that advocates for policy change will achieve success. The second way that policy entrepreneurs display social acuity is by understanding the ideas, motives, and concerns of others in their local policy context and responding effectively. Policy actors who get along well with others and who are well connected in the local policy context tend to achieve more success in securing policy change than do others (Kingdon, 1984/1995; Mintrom & Vergari, 1998; Rabe, 2004).

### *Defining Problems*

The political dynamics of problem definition have been explored extensively by policy scholars (Allison, 1971; Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Nelson, 1984; Rochefort & Cobb, 1994; Schneider & Ingram, 1993; Schön & Rein, 1994). Problems in the policy realm invariably come with multiple attributes. How those problems get defined—or what attributes are made salient in policy discussions—can determine what individuals and groups will pay attention to them. Problem definition, then, affects how people relate specific problems to their own interests. Viewed in this way, definition of policy problems is always a political act. Effective problem definition requires the combination of social acuity with skills in conflict management and negotiation (Fisher & Patton, 1991; Heifetz, 1994).

As actors who seek to promote significant policy change, policy entrepreneurs pay close attention to problem definition. Among other things, this can involve presenting evidence in ways that suggest a crisis is at hand (Nelson, 1984; Stone, 1997), finding ways to highlight failures of current policy settings (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Henig, 2008), and drawing support from actors beyond the immediate scope of the problem (Levin & Sanger, 1994; Roberts & King, 1991; Schattschneider, 1960).

*Building Teams*

Like their counterparts in business, policy entrepreneurs are team players. Individuals are often the instigators of change, but their strength does not come from the force of their ideas alone, or from their embodiment of superhuman qualities. Rather, their real strength comes through their ability to work effectively with others. The team-building activities of policy entrepreneurs can take several forms. First, it is common to find policy entrepreneurs operating within a tight-knit team composed of individuals with different knowledge and skills, who are able to offer mutual support in the pursuit of change (Meier, 1995; Mintrom, 2000; Roberts & King, 1996). Second, as noted in our discussion of social acuity, policy entrepreneurs make use of their personal and professional networks—both inside and outside the jurisdictions where they seek to promote policy change. Policy entrepreneurs understand that their networks of contacts represent repositories of skill and knowledge that they can draw upon to support their initiatives (Burt, 2000; Knoke, 1990). Finally, policy entrepreneurs recognize the importance of developing and working with coalitions to promote policy change (Mintrom & Vergari, 1996). The size of a coalition can be crucial for demonstrating the degree of support a proposal for policy change enjoys. Just as importantly, the composition of a coalition can convey the breadth of support for a proposal. That is why policy entrepreneurs often work to gain support from groups that might appear as unlikely allies for a cause. Used effectively, the composition of a coalition can help to deflect the arguments of opponents of change (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993).

*Leading by Example*

Risk aversion among decision makers presents a major challenge for actors seeking to promote significant policy change. Policy entrepreneurs often take actions intended to reduce the perception of risk among decision makers. A common strategy involves engaging with others to clearly demonstrate the workability of a policy proposal. For several decades, those promoting deregulation of infrastructural industries in the United States—both at the state and national level—relaxed regulatory oversight in advance of seeking legislative change (Derthick & Quirk, 1985; Teske, 2004). These preemptive actions reduced the ability of opponents to block change by engendering fears about possible consequences. For similar reasons, foundations have funded pilot projects associated with expansion of health insurance coverage (Oliver & Paul-Shaheen, 1997), the use of school vouchers (Mintrom & Vergari, 2009; Moe, 1995), and support for early childhood programs (Knott & McCarthy, 2007). In all instances, the creation of working models of the proposed change served to generate crucial information about program effectiveness and practicality.

When they lead by example—taking an idea and turning it into action themselves—agents of change signal their genuine commitment to improved social outcomes. This can do a lot to win credibility with others and, hence, build momentum for change (Kotter, 1996; Quinn, 2000). Further, when policy entrepreneurs take

action, they can sometimes create situations where legislators look out of touch (Mintrom, 1997b). In such situations, the risk calculations of legislators can switch from a focus on the consequences of action to a focus on the consequences of inaction.

Other things being equal, policy entrepreneurs who exhibit the qualities discussed here are more likely to achieve success than those who do not. However, we should also recognize that policy entrepreneurs are embedded in social contexts, and that those contexts change across space and time. Given this, it might happen that a given policy entrepreneur can realize his or her policy goals without necessarily behaving in ways that are consistent with what has been said here. When attempting to assess why any particular policy entrepreneur or team of policy entrepreneurs happened to meet with success or failure, we need to look both at the broader conditions they faced and the actions that they engaged in. The elements of policy entrepreneurship noted here offer a starting point for thinking about the things that policy entrepreneurs might do to improve their chances of achieving success. At the same time, they suggest a means by which we might diagnose failure. Noting that particular policy entrepreneurs did not act in accord with our expectations, we might then go on to deduce how their choices contributed to the observed outcome.

### **Policy Entrepreneurship in Broader Explanations of Policy Change**

Having reviewed four elements central to policy entrepreneurship, we now discuss how the concept of policy entrepreneurship can be integrated into five mainstream theorizations of policy change.<sup>3</sup> In so doing, we seek to address a frequent limitation of previous discussions of the activities of policy entrepreneurs.

#### *Policy Entrepreneurship and Incrementalism*

In his conceptualization of the policy process, Charles Lindblom (1968) emphasized the role of proximate policymakers. These are actors with decision-making powers such as presidents, governors, legislators, council members, and bureaucrats. Proximate policymakers are subject to influence both from inside and from outside of their various policy venues. Motivated by their own interests and agendas, they interact with each other with the hope of gathering support for their policy preferences. Lindblom rejected the notion that policymakers conduct rational, comprehensive assessments of options and consequences when making policy choices. According to Lindblom, policies are often made in a reactive fashion. Among policymakers, there are often divergent views and unanimity is difficult to achieve. As a result, policies emerge as compromises. The political posturing and risk avoidance exhibited by proximate policymakers result in incrementalism. That is, policy changes occur slowly, one step at a time. This is a way of dealing with complex policy

issues. The policymakers do not do anything in haste, fearing the backlash associated with a misstep.

In this conceptualization of policymaking, there is room to consider the role of the policy entrepreneur. Policy entrepreneurs might come from the ranks of proximate policymakers or they might be more on the margins of policymaking circles. According to Lindblom, the key to successfully engaging proximate policymakers is to present your argument in an appealing form. Likewise, proximate policymakers can be influenced by their assessments of the interests represented in a policy entrepreneur's coalition, and the size and strength of it. When seeking to have influence from outside the centers of policymaking, policy entrepreneurs must be careful to cultivate close contacts with those who are in decision-making positions. In this way, they can demonstrate their trustworthiness and their commitment to their ideas for policy change. Provost (2003, 2006) has explored the systematic ways that state attorneys general have sought to influence policymaking in their jurisdictions. Rabe (2004) has shown how state-level policy analysts and others in bureaucratic positions can have influence when technical issues are at stake.

Incrementalism presents a frustrating inhibitor to dramatic change. However, patient actors who hold a clear vision of the end they are seeking can still move policy in directions they desire. The key is to see how a series of small changes could, over time, produce similar results as more dramatic, immediate change. To maintain a functioning coalition, under incrementalism, policy entrepreneurs must keep track of their small victories and explain to their supporters how those incremental steps are taking them in the right direction.

### *Policy Entrepreneurship and Policy Streams*

John Kingdon's (1984/1995) policy streams theory is concerned with why and how certain issues get attention at certain times. Kingdon explored how ideas gain support through formal and informal routes. Within his theory, Kingdon recognized the role that policy entrepreneurs play in linking problems, policy ideas, and politics to draw attention to issues and articulate them onto government agendas. According to Kingdon, policy entrepreneurs must find effective ways to present problems and solutions within the community of relevant actors who can contribute to debate on a given issue. Often, a good sense of timing is critical; that is, the ability to perceive and take advantage of windows of opportunity.

Kingdon's theory of policy streams has informed the work of many scholars of policy change. His portrait of policy entrepreneurs as agents of change—people who make connections across disparate groups, and engaging with proximate policymakers—has also been influential. Taking Kingdon's work as a point of departure, several efforts have been made to advance discussion of timing in the policy process (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993; Geva-May, 2004; Zahariadis, 2007). In other works that have been influenced by Kingdon's theory, closer attention has been paid to the identification of policy entrepreneurs and the analysis of their actions (Mintrom, 2000; Roberts & King, 1996).

*Policy Entrepreneurs and Institutionalism*

The literature comprising the new institutionalism has developed in a number of distinctive ways (Hall & Taylor, 1996; March & Olsen, 1989; Ostrom, 2007; Thelen, 1999). However, despite the differences in methodological perspective and substantive focus, contributions to the new institutionalism all share a deep interest in the interplay between structures and the agency of actors operating within or across them. Understood as the rules of the game, institutions serve to provide stability and certainty to those operating within them (Eggertsson, 1990; North, 1990). Alongside the development of formal rules, it is common to find the emergence of informal norms of behavior that further serve to guide the behaviors of actors within the institutional structures (Barzelay & Gallego, 2006; Ostrom, 1990; Scott, 2001).

Institutionalist accounts of the policy process and policy change identify considerable space for the exercise of policy entrepreneurship (Feldman and Khademian, 2002; Majone, 1996; March & Olsen, 1989; Scharpf, 1997). However, these accounts are also useful for explaining the limits of such activity. The new institutionalism highlights several attributes of actors that can significantly increase their ability to instigate change. These include having deep knowledge of relevant procedures and the local norms that serve to define acceptable behavior. An implication of the new institutionalism, then, is that efforts to secure major change must be informed by insider sensibilities. That understanding helps us appreciate why the efforts of "outsiders" to make change often come to nothing. We are brought back to the importance of social acuity. Policy entrepreneurs must be able to understand the workings of a given context without becoming so acculturated to it that they lose their critical perspective and their motivation to promote change. Evidence suggests that policy entrepreneurs can be successful in this regard when they make good use of networks (Mintrom & Vergari, 1998) or when they form teams that contain both "insiders" and "outsiders" (Brandl, 1998; Roberts & King, 1996).

*Policy Entrepreneurs and Punctuated Equilibrium*

A discrepancy exists between incrementalist accounts of policy change and those that discuss instances of dramatic policy shifts. In seeking to reconcile these different accounts, Baumgartner and Jones (1993) developed their theory of the policy process as one characterized by long periods of stability punctuated by moments of abrupt, significant change. In this account of policy change, the role of policy entrepreneurs is noted, although more emphasis is placed on the broader dynamics that drive stability and change. As in Lindblom's account, Baumgartner and Jones suggested that stability is the product of the limited ability for legislators to deal with more than a few issues at a time (see also Jones, 1994; Jones & Baumgartner, 2005). Stability is further supported by the development of policy monopolies, controlled by people who go to considerable lengths to promote positive images of current policy settings and deflect calls for change. In this interpretation of policymaking and policy change, the task for the policy entrepreneur is to bring the policy issues out into the public domain and attempt to invoke a swell of interest

intended to induce major change. Even within stable systems, the potential for change exists. For policy entrepreneurs, the challenge is to undermine the present policy images and create new ones that emphasize major problems and a need for change.

Baumgartner and Jones (1993) noted that, particularly in federal systems of government, it is possible for policy changes to occur in multiple venues. When policy change appears blocked at one level—say, the level of state governments—it might be effectively pursued elsewhere—say, at the local level. That observation is consistent with the notion of the policy entrepreneur as a change agent who can lead by example. As we noted earlier, it is possible for policy entrepreneurs to prompt change in one policy venue by first pursuing it in another.

Drawing upon the work of Baumgartner and Jones (1993), several studies have subsequently explored linkages between the actions of policy entrepreneurs and the initiation of dynamic policy change. These include contributions by John (1999, 2003), Peters (1994), and True (2000).

### *Policy Entrepreneurs and Advocacy Coalitions*

Paul A. Sabatier's theorization of policy change has generated the advocacy coalition framework and ongoing refinements (Sabatier, 1988; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993; Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Advocacy coalitions are portrayed as "people from a variety of positions (e.g., elected and agency officials, interest group leaders, researchers) who share a particular belief system—that is, a set of basic values, causal assumptions, and problem perceptions—and who show a nontrivial degree of coordinated activity over time" (Sabatier, 1988, p. 139). Coalition participants seek to ensure the maintenance and evolution of policy in particular areas, such as environmental management, education, and population health. The advocacy coalition framework tells us how ideas for change emerge from dedicated people that coalesce around an issue. Policy entrepreneurship is not treated explicitly within the framework. However, there is considerable room for compatibility between explanations of policy change grounded in the advocacy coalition framework and those grounded in a focus on policy entrepreneurship. For example, within the advocacy coalition framework, change is anticipated to come from both endogenous and exogenous shocks. But, to have political effect, those shocks need to be interpreted and translated. This process of translation is directly equivalent to the process of problem definition, whereby objective social, economic, and environmental conditions are portrayed in ways that increase the likelihood that they will receive the attention desired of decision makers. Policy entrepreneurs typically display skills needed to do this kind of translational and definitional work.

Mintrom and Vergari (1996) considered the link between formation and maintenance of advocacy coalitions and the efforts of policy entrepreneurs. In that account, emphasis was given to how policy entrepreneurs define problems in ways that maximize opportunities for bringing on board coalition partners. The value to advocacy coalitions of strong team builders was also emphasized and demonstrated empirically. In subsequent studies, drawing on empirical evidence across a range of

policy areas and policymaking venues, Goldfinch and Hart (2003), Hajime (1999), Litfin (2000) and Meijerink (2005), among others, have indicated the merits of incorporating a discussion of policy entrepreneurship within discussions of advocacy coalitions.

The consensus found in most discussions of policymaking is that policy change typically occurs incrementally. However, instances arise where problems are not able to be readily addressed within existing policy settings. The concept of policy entrepreneurship helps us make sense of what happens in and around policy communities during these times. But the value of policy entrepreneurship as a concept is greatly increased when it is integrated with broader theorizations of the sources of policy stability and policy change. Our purpose here has been to show how that can be achieved. We have also noted empirical studies produced in the past two decades that have started to provide this kind of joining of policy entrepreneurship with other explanations of policy change.

### Recent Empirical Investigations

Recently, those seeking to explain significant policy change have increasingly made use of the concept of policy entrepreneurship. The concept has been applied to a diverse set of policy areas. The set includes—but is certainly not limited to—the design of welfare policy (Crowley, 2003), the rise of school choice (Mintrom, 2000), efforts to reform health care (Oliver & Paul-Shaheen, 1997), abatement of greenhouse gas emissions (Rabe, 2004), and the disposal of radioactive waste (Ringius, 2001). Although the concept of policy entrepreneurship has been developed and refined primarily in the United States, it has now been applied to explain policy change in many countries, including Australia (Goldfinch & Hart, 2003; MacKenzie, 2004), China (Zhu, 2008), Germany (Dyson, 2008), New Zealand (Mintrom, 2006), Sweden (Reinstaller, 2005), and the United Kingdom (Petchey, Williams, & Carter, 2008). The concept of policy entrepreneurship has also been applied to explain the diffusion of policy ideas across countries (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000; Stone, 2004). Here, we discuss two recent empirical investigations, one by Rabe (2004), and the other by Crowley (2003). Both investigations used the concept of policy entrepreneurship to explain instances of significant policy change.

Rabe (2004) documented the emergence of policy entrepreneurs who highlighted the issue of climate change and championed new approaches to environmental policy at the state level in the United States. According to Rabe, environmental policy entrepreneurs tend to have expertise in the energy or environment sectors. They are thus well placed within the relevant policy venues to promote issues onto state legislative agendas. Rabe particularly noted the ability of environmental policy entrepreneurs to build strong and decisive coalitions from within the pool of elected officials, industry, and interest groups. Rabe highlighted the major obstacle to greenhouse gas reduction initiatives as economic concerns, especially the “tendency to depict environmental protection efforts as posing a zero-sum trade-off with economic growth” (Rabe, 2004, p. 28). However, the policy entrepreneurs in Rabe’s study often worked to redefine the problem and how to approach it. Indeed,

it was common for them to emphasize the opportunities for economic development that could come from development of green technologies.

With respect to our interest in the integration of policy entrepreneurship within broader theorizations of policy stability and policy change, it is noteworthy that many of the policy entrepreneurs identified by Rabe were proximate policymakers. For example, Rabe identified several state governors and their advisors as policy entrepreneurs. Given the constraints they face around decision making and the need to strike compromises, such actors often settle for making small policy changes so that policymaking proceeds incrementally. Nonetheless, Rabe noted instances where these policy entrepreneurs used their specialized knowledge of policy processes and governmental systems to significant advantage. In particular, Rabe identified cases where policy entrepreneurs worked carefully over time to craft strategic coalitions of supporters. Having developed this kind of power base during periods of policy stability, they were then able to readily discern windows of opportunities for policy action when they emerged. At these times, the policy entrepreneurs acted rapidly to capitalize on their previous, patient efforts. Their early creation of advocacy coalitions, their efforts to keep their coalitions together, and their recognition of the value of even incremental gains built momentum that allowed them to secure significant policy change when the time was ripe. Rabe's study showed that environmental policy change demands committed and well-informed leaders. Although such change is difficult to secure, some of the policy entrepreneurs in Rabe's study met with considerable success.

Crowley (2003) conducted an investigation into the role of policy entrepreneurs in the development of policy concerning child support. In contrast to Rabe's study, which focuses on a period consisting of just a few years, Crowley studied policy entrepreneurship over a period of several decades. In so doing, she highlighted the role of various groups who acted as policy entrepreneurs. Significantly, the policy entrepreneurs in Crowley's study often worked to make policy gains that subsequently served as the platforms for successor groups to push for even more dramatic gains. This observed baton-passing across generations of policy entrepreneurs paralleled broader shifts in the political climate in the United States. Initially, the issue of child support was championed by charities. Later, in the 1960s, social workers campaigned to extend social services to mothers. Moving into more contemporary times, the key policy entrepreneurs included the leaders of groups seeking to advance the rights of women, and elected women politicians. However, these policy entrepreneurs also had to find ways to operate in policy communities where conservative groups, including fathers' rights groups, increasingly sought to shape public policy. Crowley's study highlights how a public policy issue can be picked up by many different individuals or groups who act as policy entrepreneurs and pursue the issue according to their own unique perspectives and proposed solutions. The study shows how complex and contentious policy issues call for long-term attention, and how the problems themselves, and how they are framed, can evolve over time.

For the purpose of our review, Crowley's study is significant in two ways. First, it demonstrates how a movement for policy change is influenced by the political climate. We noted earlier the importance of context for shaping the actions of policy

entrepreneurs. Crowley shows how the interaction between actors and their context can be played out over a period of decades. Changes in the broader political climate can result in new groups forming, new arguments being made, and dramatic turns in policy design.

Second, Crowley's study highlights competition among policy entrepreneurs themselves. Often, discussions of policy entrepreneurship have characterized the policymaking context as consisting of a group of like-minded change advocates doing battle with myriad forces seeking to maintain the status quo. Crowley alerts us to more complicated possibilities. Indeed, the politics of policy change can get extremely interesting when the contest does not involve simply shifting the status quo but also involves debate over the direction that such a shift should take. Policy debate can grow heated when the jostling for position is among feminists, advocates for fathers' rights, and those who believe they speak mostly for the interests of children. Other policy issues might not generate quite as much confrontation. However, as we study policy entrepreneurship and policy change, it is useful to investigate the possibility that advocacy for change might be coming from multiple directions. The question then becomes how effectively policy entrepreneurs can counter each other, as well as the forces for maintenance of the status quo.

It is instructive to note some points of difference between these recent studies by Crowley (2003) and Rabe (2004). While both highlighted the actions of policy entrepreneurs, the issues they looked at were fundamentally different. Child support is an issue which permeates domestic life, if not directly, then indirectly through the persistence of child poverty as an inhibitor of social advancement. The issue of climate change is altogether different. Although there is increasing interest in this issue, to date, citizens have not felt real, tangible disadvantages because of global warming. This helps us to explain why serious attention has only been paid to the issue when the policy entrepreneurs have emerged from within government agencies. They are professionals, with specialist knowledge, who have a real grasp of the situation, and can foresee the risk of the status quo. The issue is also transnational, and so solutions are not narrowly focused to one jurisdiction; they must include the solutions and initiatives of other states and international targets and norms. Despite these major differences in the substance of the Crowley and Rabe studies, both highlight the value of the concept of policy entrepreneurship for helping to explain instances of significant policy change.

### **Future Directions for Studies of Policy Entrepreneurship**

The activities of policy entrepreneurs have received close attention in several studies over the past decade or so, and new applications of the concept are appearing with increasing frequency. However, the concept of policy entrepreneurship is yet to be broadly integrated within analyses of policy change. Here, we have shown how the concept might be better integrated into mainstream theorizations of the policy process and change dynamics. We have also shown how recent applications of policy entrepreneurship as a key explanation of policy change have expanded our understanding of the role of policy entrepreneurs. New insights have begun to emerge

concerning when proximate policymakers are most likely to act as policy entrepreneurs. The role of information, risk, and trustworthiness become paramount in cases where the issues are complex and their effects on citizens seem remote, even if they could be significant in the future. New insights have also started to emerge concerning the sequencing of policy entrepreneurship over long periods of time and the ways that the broader political climate can affect the context for policy entrepreneurs, how they frame problems, and how they work with others. Finally, we are beginning to see how the context for policy entrepreneurship can be complicated when multiple perspectives exist concerning the direction that policy change should take from the status quo.

Room remains for more conceptual development and empirical testing concerning policy entrepreneurship. We here suggest two directions for fruitful future work. There is a need for closer study of the motivations and strategies used by policy entrepreneurs. There is also a need for more study of the interactions between policy entrepreneurs and their specific policy contexts. Various research methods could be employed in such studies; as always, methods must be shaped to the specifics of the research subjects and their contexts.

The motivations of policy entrepreneurs have gained limited attention to date. Why are people prepared to allocate large amounts of time and energy to activities where great uncertainty surrounds what impacts they will have? From a rational actor perspective, we like to believe that some degree of self-interest must be at stake. Indeed, evidence can be found of self-interest motivating the actions of change agents. Teodoro (2009) has investigated the career paths of bureaucrats and the tendency for individuals to introduce organizational innovations in new environments. His findings indicate that bureaucratic actors who develop track records for innovative action and who are prepared to move across organizations are rewarded in terms of faster-than-usual career progression. The evidence here points to clear incentives for such individuals to engage in activities that approximate those of the policy entrepreneur. In the history of political science, few systematic explorations have been conducted of political ambition (see, e.g., Herrick & Moore, 1993; Schlesinger, 1991). Systematic, comparative studies of the career trajectories of policy entrepreneurs could provide valuable answers to questions of motivation. They could also help to further build our knowledge of how policy entrepreneurs develop relevant social acuity, effectiveness in defining problems, building teams, and leading by example. Indeed, effective studies along these lines could serve as a catalyst for the systematic examination of political leadership—a topic that is of huge public interest but that has gained sparse attention among political scientists since the work of Burns (1978); see, for example, Jones (1989). Work along these lines could be effectively supported by a mixture of survey-based quantitative research and comparative case studies of political careers. They could be fruitfully informed by the vast amount of conceptual and empirical work that has been produced in recent decades concerning structure and agency, and the ways that institutions create opportunities for individual actors.

Exactly how contextual factors serve to constrain and shape the actions of policy entrepreneurs also requires more attention. Through our discussion, we have seen

that certain circumstances are more or less likely to favor the emergence of policy outsiders or insiders as policy entrepreneurs. The relative strengths and weaknesses of seeking change from inside or outside structures of political decision making need to be more carefully delineated. Mintrom (2000) presented a methodology for quantitatively exploring the relative significance of contextual factors versus the actions and attributes of policy entrepreneurs for affecting policy change. Quantitative work of this kind still promises to shed the most light on issues relating to structure and agency. However, systematic case studies can also generate important insights. In combination, case work and quantitative work could help to build cumulative knowledge that addresses questions concerning contextual effects.

Over the past decade, new studies of policy entrepreneurship have been conducted in a range of country settings. These studies have been important for confirming the portability of political entrepreneurship as a concept. However, as a research strategy, applying established concepts into new settings is subject to the problem of diminished new insights emerging from each new study. The research challenge is how to leverage the study of policy entrepreneurship in new contexts so as to achieve conceptual breakthroughs. Toward this end, cross-national studies of policy entrepreneurship hold considerable promise. Evidence has been emerging on how various international norms diffuse and become established within national policy settings (Checkel, 2001; Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). Other evidence has emerged on how the federated nature of the European Union opens possibilities for the European Commission to serve a dissemination role through the creation of policy networks, the promotion of information sharing, and incentives for change (Grande & Peschke, 1999; Laffan, 1997; Zippel, 2004). This evidence suggests that careful cross-national investigations of the means by which popular policy ideas get translated into policy settings in specific jurisdictions could yield major insights into the roles played by policy entrepreneurs in promoting policy change and the transnational diffusion of policy innovations. Methodologically, such work could quickly become complex, suggesting the need for researchers to confine their studies to a small number of country cases and to focus their studies around one or two specific policy ideas or norms. This proposed research strategy holds appeal because, at a minimum, it would require researchers to add only one extra country case to their existing one-country empirical studies. However, the real value-added would come through the conceptualization of this cross-national work, and efforts to interpret how contextual similarities and differences might explain the observed behaviors of policy entrepreneurs.

To date, most studies of policy entrepreneurship have focused on contemporary episodes of policy change. However, significant insights can emerge from historical studies and from studies that involve a time frame of several decades. Importantly, in the study of policy change over long periods of time, it is likely that the policy entrepreneurs will change, the political climate will change, and change will occur in the nature of the arguments made for policy change. Much useful work could be done exploring how movements for change evolve over time.

In advocating new investigations along these lines, we return to the preoccupation of this review. That is, while the actions of policy entrepreneurs have been

gaining increased attention, the concept of policy entrepreneurship is yet to gain a central place within explanations of policy change. We believe that the truly breakthrough future work on policy entrepreneurship will come when the concept is integrated with more mainstream theorizations of policy change. Such an integration is possible. We have suggested ways that it might be done. We have also noted studies where efforts at such integration have been made. Of course, we realize that further work along these lines is likely to result in major shifts in how we think about policy entrepreneurship. That observation has a flip side. Further work to integrate policy entrepreneurship into mainstream theorizations of policy change holds the potential of changing our notions of the mainstream itself. We end, then, with a provocation. If you want to make a splash in the study of policy change, doing some innovative work with the concept of policy entrepreneurship would be a great place to start.

**Michael Mintrom** is an associate professor of Political Studies at the University of Auckland in New Zealand. His books include *Policy Entrepreneurs and School Choice* (Georgetown University Press, 2000).

**Phillipa Norman** is a student of Political Studies and Law at the University of Auckland in New Zealand. She worked on this article during her Summer Scholarship of 2008–2009.

### Notes

1. Entrepreneurial behavior in a range of contexts has been studied by scholars across a range of disciplines. Important contributions have been made in economics, business, sociology, and psychology. Mintrom (2000) devotes two chapters to reviewing the broader literature and the history of the concept of the entrepreneur before detailing how the concept might be translated to the policy context.
2. We acknowledge that many additional entrepreneurial traits could be usefully studied to gain insights into how people promote policy change. For example, in their respective studies of entrepreneurial behavior among legislators, Thomas (1991) and Weissert (1991) placed emphasis on other entrepreneurial traits, such as assertiveness and commitment. However, for the purpose of this article, we assume that traits such as assertiveness and commitment are captured in the practice of leadership by example and effective team building.
3. The concept of policy entrepreneurship could potentially be integrated into a much broader range of explanations of policy change than those we have chosen to review. Here, our choice of explanations was based on their prominence and breadth of application within the field of policy studies. Many other theories exist concerning policymaking processes and how policy change occurs. For an overview of such theories, see Sabatier (2007).

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