

9 A Guide to the Advocacy Coalition Framework

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The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) is a policymaking framework developed to deal with intense public policy problems (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1988, 1993, 1999). It is best served as a lens to understand and explain belief and policy change when there is goal disagreement and technical disputes involving multiple actors from several levels of government, interests groups, research institutions, and the media (Hoppe and Peterse 1993). The ACF has proven to be one of the more useful public policy frameworks (Schlager 1995; Schlager and Blomquist 1996; Johns 2003).

Since the ACF's inception in 1988, there have been dozens of ACF case studies and publications. Recent examples are listed in Table 9.1.¹ Most applications deal with energy and environmental policy in the United States, Canada, and Europe (e.g., air pollution, marine/coastal policy, water policy, oil/minerals, and climate change). But researchers have increasingly applied the ACF to policy areas outside of energy and environmental policy (e.g., domestic violence, drug policy, and public health). There has also been an increase in the number of researchers applying the ACF to issues in Asia, Africa, Australia, and South America.

Despite the worldwide applications of the ACF in a variety of policy areas, we are observing a need for a more digestible version of the ACF for public and private managers.¹ This chapter provides a field guide to the ACF. It is written for people without a strong public policy or political science background who are interested in formally and informally applying the ACF to think criti-

TABLE 9.1
Recent Examples of ACF Applications

Author	Year	Geographic Scope	Substantive Topic
Applications by ACF Authors and Students			
Herron and Jenkins-Smith	2002	U.S.	Nuclear security
Zafonte and Sabatier	2004	U.S.	Air pollution
Weible and Sabatier	2005	U.S.	Marine protected areas
Leach and Sabatier	2005	U.S.	Watershed partnerships
Applications by Other Researchers			
Jordan and Greenaway	1998	U.K.	Coastal water policy
Sato	1999	Japan	Smoking control
Abrar, Lovenduski, and Margetts	2000	U.K.	Domestic violence
Liftin	2000	Canada	Climate change policy
Carvalho	2001	Brazil	Metallurgical development
Kübler	2001	Switzerland	Drug policy
Bryant	2002	Canada	Public health
Chen	2003	Australia	Censorship
Farquharson	2003	Global	Tobacco policy
Kim	2003	Korea	Water policy
Beverwijks	2004	Mozambique	Education policy
Green and Haulihan	2004	Canada and U.K.	Sport policy
Sewell	2005	U.S., the Netherlands, and Japan	Climate change policy

cally about, or to help understand and explain, policy processes. In doing so, we describe a trimmed down version of the ACF, notably overlooking discussion of the hypotheses and revisions. More detailed descriptions of the ACF can be found in Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1988; 1993; 1999).

We begin by explaining the components in the ACF flow diagram (Figure 9.1) and then explain how these components interact to affect belief and policy change. One of the best ways to understand, learn, and use the ACF is through an application. To help explain the ACF, we utilize a case study of water quality policy in the Lake Tahoe Basin where we have applied the ACF to help understand more than 30 years of belief and policy change (Sabatier, Hunter, and McLaughlin 1987; Sabatier and Hunter 1989; Sabatier and Pelkey 1990; Sabatier and Brasher, 1993; Sabatier, Weible, Hulsman, and Nechodom 2003; Weible and Sabatier 2004). We conclude this chapter with a summary of the ACF's strengths and limitations.

STRUCTURE OF THE ACF

Figure 9.1 shows a structural diagram of the ACF (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999). Generally, policymaking occurs in a policy subsystem, which is a policy area that is geographically bounded and encompasses policy participants from all levels of government, multiple interests groups, re-

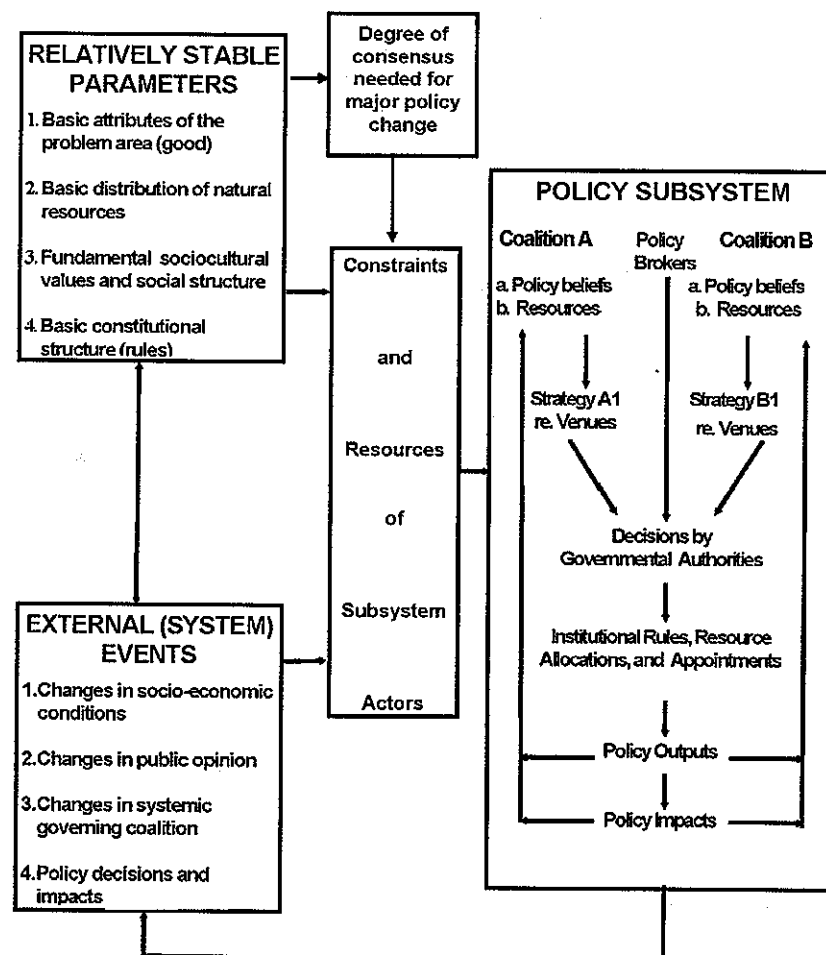


FIGURE 9.1 Diagram of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (Source: Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999).

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TABLE 9.2
Summary of Application of the ACF Applied to the Lake Tahoe Basin

ACF Component	Lake Tahoe Water Quality Application
Relatively Stable Parameters Basic Attribute of the Problem Area Basic distribution of natural resources Fundamental cultural values and social structure Basic constitutional structure	Deep and clear lake Dispute of land use in the Lake Tahoe Basin Property rights and environmental values Fragmented governance including the federal agencies, two states, and five local governments.
Policy Subsystem Territorial Scope Substantive Scope Policy Participants	Lake Tahoe Basin Water quality policy U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, CA Department of Parks and Recreation, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, city and county governments, businesses (e.g., casinos), Sierra Preservation Council (property rights group), League to Save Lake Tahoe (environmental group), university researchers, and <i>Tahoe Tribune</i> (local newspaper)
Belief Systems Deep Core Beliefs Policy Core Beliefs Secondary Beliefs	Neoconservative beliefs Pro-development beliefs Specific policy proposals regarding water quality (e.g., prohibiting housing on steep lots)
Advocacy Coalitions	Pro-development vs. Pro-water quality coalitions
Policy Broker	Bill Morgan mitigated consensus in 1987
Resources	Scientific information
Venues	Federal and state courts, state legislatures, regional agency decisions, collaborative institutions
Mechanisms of Policy Change Accumulation of Evidence	Science showing declining water quality from 1960s to present and atmospheric deposition as a major cause of nutrient input.
Hurting Stalemate External Shock	Political impasse in 1984 led to compromise between coalitions. Growth of the environmental movement 1960s to 1970s

Note: Based on Sabatier and Pelkey (1990), Sabatier, Hunter, and McLaughlin (1993); Sabatier and Brasher (1993), Sabatier et al., (2003), and Weible and Sabatier (2004).

search institutions, and the media. Within a policy subsystem, policy participants coordinate their behavior with allies in advocacy coalitions to influence policy. The policy subsystems are set within, are affected by, and sometime affect, a broader societal context. The ACF groups the broad societal context into two categories: relatively stable parameters and external events. In the space below, we describe the three main components of Figure 9.1. First, we describe the relatively stable parameters, then discuss policy subsystems, and finally describe external events.² We summarize the application of the ACF to the Lake Tahoe Basin water quality policy subsystem in Table 9.2.

RELATIVELY STABLE PARAMETERS

The upper left box of Figure 9.1 lists a set of relatively stable parameters: (1) basic attributes of the problem area, (2) basic distribution of natural resources, (3) fundamental socio-cultural values and social structure, and (4) basic constitutional structure (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993; 1999). The relatively stable parameters are stable over long periods of time, approximately 100 years or more. They are important because they structure the nature of the problem, constrain the resources available to policy participants, establish the rules and procedures for changing policy and reaching collective decisions, and broadly frame the values that inform policymaking. Because of their

Smith, 1999).

resistance to change, the relatively stable parameters are usually not strategically targeted by policy participants.

In the context of our case study, the basic attribute of the Lake Tahoe Basin is a very unique geological setting. The Lake Tahoe Basin has a predominately granite basin (covering 70 percent of the watershed), which limits the amount of nutrients leached into the water. Since the Lake's surface area is rather large compared to the watershed, Lake Tahoe receives 40 percent of its precipitation directly from rainfall. Lake Tahoe's unique geological condition has created one of the largest and clearest lakes in the world. The geological conditions also make the Lake susceptible to nutrient input from changes in the land use, which potentially darkens Lake Tahoe's clear waters.

The basic distribution of Tahoe's water is not disputed, but land use in the Basin is. From the 1850s to the early 1900s, the first Euro-American explorers mined and forested the Basin. The economy shifted to summer tourism in the early twentieth century and then to year-round tourism in the 1960s after a major highway made the area more assessable and after the 1964 Winter Olympics brought notoriety to the Basin. The number of residents and tourists boomed in the Basin (Kauneckis, Koziol, and Imperial 2000; Elliot-Fisk et al. 1996).³ While many small lots were developed, many more were bought with the expectation of building primary and secondary homes in the future (Sabatier and Pelkey 1990). It was at this time that scientists started to monitor Lake Tahoe water quality, recording gradual declines in clarity (Jassby et al. 2001).

The Lake Tahoe Basin is set within a very diverse U.S. social-cultural landscape. To generalize, the U.S. culture is based on the fundamental beliefs of limited government and of the protection of personal liberties, especially regarding private property rights. Like many societies, the U.S. grapples with the clash between individual rights versus the public interest (Stone 1997). This clash is evident in the Tahoe Basin where pristine, clear waters are open to public use and enjoyment while the thousands of privately owned, subdivided lots are, or are ready to be, developed.

The constitutional structure framing the governance of the Lake Tahoe Basin is complex. Straddling California and Nevada within the United States, the jurisdiction is shared within a federal system under the constitutions of two state governments and the federal government. At the local level, authority is granted to five counties (Washoe, Douglas, Ormsby/Carson City, El Dorado, and Placer) and one incorporated city (South Lake Tahoe). The shared jurisdiction makes it very difficult to reach collective decisions in the Basin and makes a supermajority a necessity for policy making. To address the fragmented decision making in the Basin, policymakers established a regional agency in 1960s to coordinate policymaking (Sabatier and Pelkey 1990).

POLICY SUBSYSTEM

The relatively stable parameters frame the policymaking process within a policy subsystem (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999). A policy subsystem is defined by its territorial boundary, a substantive topic, and by the hundreds of policy participants from all levels of government, multiple interest groups, the media, and research institutions.⁴ To influence policy, policy participants both specialize in a policy subsystem to effectively achieve their objectives and maintain their participation over long periods of time to ensure their objectives are achieved (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993).

For the Lake Tahoe water quality policy subsystem, the geographic boundary is enclosed by the Lake Tahoe watershed and substantively bounded by water quality policy—indirectly including land use and development in the Basin. The Lake Tahoe Basin involves hundreds of policy participants, who seek to influence water quality policy decisions. The policy participants include federal agencies (e.g., U.S. Environmental Protection Agency), state agencies (e.g., California Department of Parks and Recreation), regional agencies (e.g., Tahoe Regional Planning Agency), local governments (e.g., city and county governments), businesses (e.g., casinos), property rights groups (e.g., Tahoe-Sierra Preservation Council), environmental groups (e.g., League to Save Lake

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Tahoe), researchers (e.g., University of California, Davis and University of Reno, Nevada), and journalists (e.g., *Tahoe Tribune*). We have found that some policy participants have been involved in Lake Tahoe water quality policy for more than 30 years.

Sometimes it is difficult to define the geographic and substantive boundaries of a policy subsystem because some policy subsystems are nested within broader policy subsystems and because some policy participants are active in more than one policy subsystem. For example, Lake Tahoe water quality policy subsystem is nested within both state (i.e., California and Nevada) and federal water policy subsystems (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999). There is no single rule for defining policy subsystems. This flexibility gives the ACF applicability but makes it hard to apply. We suggest that policy subsystem boundaries be ascertained empirically. For most cases, we recommend that ACF applicators identify the appropriate policy subsystem scope by conducting preliminary interviews of policy participants and asking them to identify the territorial and substantive boundary of the issue and the major interest groups and government agencies involved.

Within a policy subsystem, the ACF makes several assumptions and hypotheses regarding (1) the cognitive abilities, motivations, and beliefs of policy participants (called the "model of the individual"), (2) the tendency for most policy participants to join advocacy coalitions, (3) the likelihood that few policy participants remain neutral as policy brokers, (4) the use of resources by coalitions, and (5) the venues within which coalitions influence policy. In the subsections that follow, we describe these assumptions and hypotheses.

Model of the Individual

The ACF presumes that individuals are rationally motivated but are bounded by their imperfect cognitive ability to learn about, and comprehend, a complex world (Simon 1985). Having cognitive constraints, individuals are limited by their capacity to acquire and learn new information. To simplify events and the world around them, ACF individuals filter perceptions through their belief system (Lord, Ross, and Lepper 1979; Scholz and Pinney 1995). They tend to filter or ignore information that challenges their beliefs and readily accept information that bolsters their beliefs. These perceptual filters tend to discount even high-quality technical information if it conflicts with their beliefs and accept technical information with high uncertainty if it supports their beliefs. People viscerally associate themselves with their beliefs, making them very suspicious of people with dissimilar beliefs. They also remember lost policy battles—which they internalize as a painful personal loss—more than previous victories (Quattrone and Tversky 1988). This increases their emotional fear of their opponents, bypassing more rational thinking (McDermott 2004). This makes individuals highly susceptible to exaggerating the influence and maliciousness of their opponents, which in turn strengthens their ties with others who have similar beliefs (Sabatier et al. 1987; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999). In sum, the ACF's model of the individual motivates policy participants to seek out like-minded allies and form advocacy coalitions (see below).

The ACF assumes that individuals have a three-tiered hierarchical belief system. On the top tier are deep core beliefs, which are normative/fundamental beliefs that span multiple policy subsystems and are very resistant to change. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) define four components of deep core beliefs that span from relative value priorities (e.g., individual rights vs. social rights) to socio-cultural identity (e.g., ethnicity and religion).⁵

In the middle tier are policy core beliefs, which are normative/empirical beliefs that span an entire policy subsystem. Policy core beliefs are still resistant to change but are more pliable than deep core beliefs. The ACF identifies eleven categories of policy core beliefs, including perceptions of the severity and causes of subsystem-wide problems, orientation on basic value priorities directly related to the policy subsystem, the effectiveness of policy instruments, and the proper distribution of authority between the market and government (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999).⁶

We found the best way to operationalize policy core beliefs is through preliminary interviews with policy participants. We typically ask policy participants to comment on the seriousness of a problem, their perceptions of the causes of the problem, or their preferences for resolving a problem. We find that policy participants often have short 10 to 20 second statements that summarize their beliefs regarding a particular policy issue. We take their narrative responses and use them—often word for word—as our policy core belief questions in a survey.

On the lowest tier are secondary beliefs, which are empirical beliefs and policy preferences that relate to a subcomponent (either substantively or territorially) of a policy subsystem. Secondary beliefs include policy participants' preferences for specific government tools for achieving objectives or their perceptions of problems in specific locales.⁷ Of the three layers of beliefs, secondary beliefs are most susceptible to change in response to new information and events.

Advocacy Coalitions

The success of policy participants depends upon their ability to translate their policy core beliefs into actual policy. To increase their chances for success, policy participants seek out allies with similar policy core beliefs and coordinate their actions with these allies in advocacy coalitions. Thus, advocacy coalitions include policy participants that both (1) share similar policy core beliefs and (2) engage in nontrivial degree of coordination (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999).⁸

In the Lake Tahoe Basin, we found evidence of at least two advocacy coalitions (Sabatier et al. 1987; Sabatier and Brasher 1993; Sabatier et al. 2003).⁹ One coalition is a pro-development advocacy coalition consisting of developers, business owners, property rights groups, and local governments. The second coalition is a pro-water quality advocacy coalition consisting of environmental groups, research institutions, and regional, state, and federal agencies. Our data suggests that these two advocacy coalitions have been fighting over the land use and environmental protection since the early 1970s when the first regional plan for the management of the Basin was developed (Costantini and Hanf 1972; Sabatier et al. 2003). Conflict between these coalitions escalated for more than a decade, peaking in 1984 when members of both coalitions filed lawsuits after a new regional management plan was adopted. In June 1984, a court order enjoined all construction to stop in the Basin until an acceptable plan was put into affect. This moratorium put the pro-water quality coalition in control, but only temporarily. In response, the 1985 Nevada Legislature threatened to withdraw that state from the bi-state compact with California, which would have thrown water quality regulation in the Basin into utter chaos (Sabatier and Pelkey 1990; Elliot-Fisk et al. 1996; Kauneckis et al. 2000). This ushered in a period that the ACF calls a "hurting stalemate" (see below), where policy participants on both sides of the issue consider the status quo unacceptable and perceive no alternate venues for achieving their objectives (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999).

Policy Brokers

In a policy subsystem, most policy participants coordinate with allies in advocacy coalitions and work together to translate their beliefs into policy. In competitive policy subsystems, policy disagreements between advocacy coalitions often escalate into intense political conflicts. These conflicts are often mediated by "policy brokers." Whereas most policy participants seek to influence policy processes and outcomes in advocacy coalitions, policy brokers seek to find reasonable compromise among hostile coalitions. Many different actors play the policy broker role. Policy brokers include elected officials (Munro 1993), high civil servants (Doggan 1975), and courts (Mawinney 1993). Policy brokers are usually trusted by both coalitions and have some decision making authority. There is a thin line between policy brokers and policy activists. Sometimes policy activists, concerned about

the maintenance and survival of a policy subsystem, will seek to act as a policy broker. Other times, a facilitator is hired from outside the policy subsystem to be the policy broker.

After more than 15 years of political conflict in the Lake Tahoe Basin and during a hurting stalemate between the pro-development coalition and the pro-water quality coalition, a compromise was brokered in 1986/87 by Bill Morgan (Sabatier and Pelkey 1990). Bill Morgan was an executive director of a regional planning agency. Because he was trusted by both coalitions, sufficiently knowledgeable about the nature of the problem, and held a position of authority in a regional agency, Bill Morgan was in a unique position to be a policy broker. He brokered a compromise between the coalitions, which included a new parcel evaluation system, several lot acquisition programs, a right of all property owners to build eventually, a housing allocation system, and several programs for transferable development rights (Sabatier and Pelkey 1990). This compromise is still in effect today.

Resources

The ACF assumes that individuals employ a variety of resources that enable them to develop strategies to influence policy through a variety of venues. These resources include: (1) formal legal authority to make decisions, (2) public opinion, (3) information, (4) mobilizable troops, (5) financial resources, and (6) skillful leadership (Sabatier and Weible 2005). The ACF predicts that stakeholders will strategically use their resources to influence policy in various venues.¹⁰

In the Lake Tahoe Basin, one of the important resources, especially for the pro-water quality coalition, was scientific information. For more than 30 years, scientists have been monitoring water quality, and results have shown decreases in water quality levels since the 1960s.

Venues

Venues are potential arenas within which stakeholders have the opportunity to influence beliefs or policy.¹¹ Stakeholders spend considerable amount of time venue shopping, looking for an arena where they might have competitive advantage. They often launch initiatives in several venues simultaneously and defend their interests in several venues simultaneously. Coalitions attempt to influence the view of decision makers to shape policy processes and outcomes. Coalitions focus their attempt on changing institutional rules, resource allocations, and appointments (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993). These actions have certain policy outputs and impacts which feedback into the policy subsystem but also affect policy outside of the subsystem.

In the Lake Tahoe Basin, the two coalitions have sought to achieve their objectives in several venues. These venues include the state legislatures in California and Nevada, state and federal courts, agency rulemaking, and the media (Sabatier and Pelkey 1990).

External Events

The lower left box of figure one lists a set of external events that can affect a policy subsystem (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999): (1) major socioeconomic changes (Eisner 1993), (2) changes in public opinion, (3) changes in the systematic governing coalition (Brady 1988), and (4) policy decisions and impacts from other subsystems (Muller 1995).

External events are important because they often shift public attention (and thus resources) toward or away from a policy subsystem. For example, one of the big shifts in public opinion came in the 1960s and early 1970s with increased public priority for environmental values. This led to a large number of national and state environmental regulatory statutes and grants and the creation of many new environmental policy subsystems.

External events can change very gradually in a decade or so. For example, the gradual rise of the national environmental movement in the 1960s and 1970s most likely affected the rise in public concern for Lake Tahoe water quality at about the same time. External events can also shock a policy system. For examples, severe forest fires outside of the Tahoe Basin have affected policy participants' beliefs and water quality policy within the Basin (Weible, Sabatier, and Nechodom 2005).

BELIEF AND POLICY CHANGE

The ACF distinguishes between major and minor policy change.¹² Major policy change is subsystem-wide alterations of policy (changes in policy core aspects of the subsystem). The ACF defines minor policy changes as changes of a specific subcomponent of the policy subsystem (changes in secondary aspects of the policy subsystem). Minor policy changes occur more frequently and have a smaller magnitude in either the substantive or territorial scope of a policy subsystem.

The ACF defines three mechanisms leading to minor or major policy change: (1) external shocks, (2) a hurting stalemate, and (3) the general accumulation of scientific/technical evidence (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999).

External shocks are events that occur outside of a policy subsystem, e.g., changes in socioeconomic conditions, changes in governing coalitions, and impacts from other subsystems (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999). External shocks can lead to policy change in at least two ways. First, external shocks might shift resources or open/close venues because of renewed attention of the public or key decision makers. This adjusts the power among coalitions, thereby tipping the advantage to a different coalition with different policy core beliefs and potentially leading to major policy change. In other words, external shocks can replace one dominant advocacy coalition within another (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999, 148). Second, external shocks can change the policy core beliefs of a dominant advocacy coalition in the policy subsystem, leading to major policy change. For example, a pro-regulatory advocacy coalition may reconsider the adverse economic effects from stringent controls during an economic recession.

A second mechanism of policy change is through belief change via policy-oriented learning from the gradual accumulation of information, such as a scientific study, policy analysis, etc. (Weiss 1977). The ACF defines policy-oriented learning as, "relatively enduring alterations of thought or behavioral intentions that result from experience and/or new information that are concerned with the attainment or revision of policy objectives" (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999, 123). Policy-oriented learning affects the beliefs of actors within the policy subsystem, which can lead to minor and even major policy change over extended time periods. Learning is inhibited, however, because individuals face cognitive constraints and filter or avoid belief-conflicting information. Whereas external shocks can lead to rapid changes in individual policy core beliefs and, consequently, the policy core aspects of a policy subsystem, policy oriented learning may take ten years or more.

A third mechanism of policy change is a hurting stalemate (Zartman 1991). The basic precondition to successful negotiations is a situation in which all parties involved in the dispute view a continuation of the status quo as unacceptable and run out of alternate venues to achieve their objectives. The assumption is that individuals satisfied with the status quo have little incentive to give up anything in negotiations; thus, negotiating with them is probably a waste of time. Only when both coalitions are out of options and dissatisfied with the current situation are they willing to compromise and negotiate major policy change.

In the Lake Tahoe Basin, we have found three major changes in beliefs or policy that illustrate the ACF's three mechanisms of change.

The first major policy change in the Basin occurred in the late 1960s early 1970s with the creation of a regional agency and a general plan for management in the Basin (Sabatier and Pelkey 1990). This established standards, rules and procedures for water quality management in the Basin

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and formed the Lake Tahoe water quality policy subsystem. While pinpointing the exact cause is impossible, we hypothesize that the cause of this policy change springs from at least three major sources. First, there were changes in public opinion related to increased public priority of environmental values and especially increased awareness of Lake Tahoe water brought about by the winter Olympics and a major highway, making the area more assessable. Second, there were changes in socioeconomic conditions from major influx of residents and tourists in the Basin in the 1960s, which brought more environmental stress to the Basin and raised the need for coordinated collective action decisions. Third, there was a scientific report that sewage (e.g., leaky septic tanks) was a major threat to the Lake Tahoe's water quality (McGauhey et al. 1963). The multiple governments in the area responded with a new system that collected and exported all sewage out of the Basin by 1975. This also raised the collective need for regional governing agency (Sabatier and Pelkey 1990). The Basin's response to sewage is clearly an example of policy-oriented learning in response to technical information.

The second big change in Lake Tahoe water quality policy came in the 1986/87 compromise between the pro-development advocacy coalition and the pro-water quality advocacy coalition. As discussed above, the two competing advocacy coalitions were experiencing a "hurting stalemate" after a judge halted all building in the Basin and Nevada threatened to pull out of a bi-state compact with California. Since both coalitions perceived the status quo as unacceptable and ran out of venues to achieve their objectives, a compromise was possible. In 1986/87, Morgan brokered a new management plan between the two advocacy coalitions, radically altering future land use management in the Basin.

A third major change in the Basin involved shifts in beliefs regarding the seriousness and causes of the severity of water quality declines. We already discussed the Basin's response to sewage in the 1960s, which suggests that policy participants learned from a scientific report and decided to pump sewage out of the Basin. Basin scientists have also collected more than 30 years of evidence showing declines in water clarity (Jassby et al. 2001). Our research shows that the pro-development coalition radically shifted their perception of the severity of water quality declines between 1984 and 2001 (Sabatier et al. 2003; Weible and Sabatier 2004). Between 1984 and 2001, Basin scientists also found that atmospheric deposition was a major source of nutrient input (Jassby et al. 1995). Paralleling this discover, we found most coalition members are more likely to perceive atmospheric deposition as a major cause of nutrient input in 1984 than in 2001 (Weible and Sabatier 2004).¹³

CONCLUSIONS

We have found that the ACF has provided a good lens for understanding belief and policy change in the Lake Tahoe Basin. In addition, the extensive use of the ACF around the world in a variety of policy subsystems suggests that it has utility beyond Lake Tahoe water quality policy. To summarize the usefulness of the ACF, we conclude this chapter with a discussion of its strengths and limitations.

STRENGTHS

1. The ACF provides an alternate lens to de facto policymaking frameworks. Traditionally, the policy process has been based on *stages heuristic*, which sequentially distinguishes between problem identification, agenda setting, adoption, implementation, monitoring, and enforcement (Lasswell 1951).¹⁴ The ACF is a healthy alternative to the stages heuristic because it has clear causal assumptions, empirically testable hypothesis, an explicit role of information, an explicit model of the individual, and multiple interaction cycles involving hundreds of actors (Sabatier and

Jenkins-Smith 1993). The ACF is also a good comparative lens to the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework (IADF; Ostrom 1990, 1999). Whereas the ACF assumes that public policy is the translation of normative and empirical beliefs of competing advocacy coalitions, the IADF assumes that public policy (i.e., institutions) result from people's efforts to reduce the transaction costs of collective action. We strongly encourage more comparative analysis using the ACF and IADF (Leach and Sabatier 2005).

2. The ACF highlights the magnitude and the nature of political conflicts. For example, Barke's (1993) study of the conflict involving telecommunication policy in the mid-twentieth century highlighted that—even though the issue involved millions of dollars—the disagreement was over secondary beliefs (e.g., choice of television technology) and not over policy core beliefs (e.g., public vs. private ownership). Thus, the telecommunications disagreement was a low magnitude conflict with a relatively easy path to compromise. The ACF can also reveal weak links in a belief system—such as a faulty causal argument—that is susceptible over long periods of time to change from the accumulation of counterevidence. This may help coalition members or policy brokers strategically achieve their goals or negotiate collective decisions.

3. The ACF provides an alternative view to the de facto assumption that policy participants' institutional affiliation is primordial (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999). Instead, the ACF encourages researchers to view policymaking as conflicts among advocacy coalitions and provides a different means of aggregating the hundreds of actors attempting to influence policy.

4. The ACF includes a significant role of scientific and technical information in policy and political disputes. Many public policy frameworks ignore the scientific and technical information or assume that researchers, policy analysts, and scientists are neutral players. Over the years, ACF research has shown that scientists often are active members in advocacy coalitions and the important role that technical information has in fostering policy-oriented learning and policy change (Zafonte and Sabatier 1998; Herron, Jenkins-Smith, and Silva 2005).

5. The ACF is very applicable to different governing structures, cultural-societies, and policy areas. Our brief literature review in the beginning of this chapter shows that the ACF has been applied to a wide variety of public policy areas and in many different countries. We expect that researchers will continue to apply and test the ACF in different sociopolitical contexts.

LIMITATIONS

1. The ACF can be difficult to apply. To understand political conflict and policy change, the ACF assumes a perspective of a decade or more and typically involves questionnaire and interview data. This is both time-consuming and costly. If resources are not available, we encourage researchers to conduct quick, qualitative ACF-style analysis of policy subsystems. These might include a few informal interviews and an analysis of documents and reports.

2. The ACF loses some of its utility in policy subsystems without clear coalitions (May, 1989) or with just one dominant advocacy coalition (Stewart 1991). These policy subsystems tend to involve issues of low salience, involving new and often highly technical policy issues that are expert-driven and operate outside the public's eye, or in remote locations. On the flip side, the ACF is most useful in salient issues that incite political conflicts involving hundreds of policy participants representing dozens of public and private organizations in fairly well defined policy subsystems.

3. A long-standing critique of the ACF is that shared beliefs are not enough to overcome the temptation to free ride on the efforts of other coalition members (Schlager 1995; Schlager and Blomquist 1995). Recent ACF research has shown that policy core beliefs explain coordination networks and has provided some qualitative illustrations of coordination (Weible 2005; Weible and Sabatier 2005; Sabatier and Weible 2005). More research is needed, however, to verify these results and to depict what types of activities coalitions engage in.

4. The ACF argues that people primarily use shared policy core beliefs to structure their interactions into advocacy coalitions. Certainly, however, cross-coalition interactions occur. For example, state agency officials may be required to coordinate some of their interactions with commercial fishermen to manage a fishery even if fishermen are members of the opposing coalition (Weible 2005). The ACF has yet to define the minimum amount of coordinated behavior needed to define coalitions, nor the affect of these cross-coalition interactions on policy subsystem outcomes. This is particularly important with the rise of policy network analysis, which shows, for example, that ties to people in different social groups (ties to opposing coalition members) are more valuable than redundant ties to one's own social group (Granovetter 1973; Burt 1992).

5. There are some missing links in the causal processes depicted by the ACF that need additional theoretical and empirical investigation. Two of these missing links include understanding how advocacy coalitions use resources and venues and identifying the factors that structure policy subsystems to favor the existence of one dominate advocacy coalition, two or more competing advocacy coalitions, or no advocacy coalitions. Understanding these missing links is critical for piecing together and testing the subsystem processes of belief and policy change predicted by the ACF. Some of these missing links are being investigated (Sabatier and Weible 2005).

In sum, we hope to have provided a useful guide to the structure of the ACF, a good illustration of its utility in the Lake Tahoe Basin, and a summary of its strengths and limitations. We suspect that additional applications and empirical testing of hypotheses will lead to further refinement and hopefully better explanations of policy processes. We encourage others to partake in these activities.

NOTES

1. For example, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization is considering the ACF for one of its social science frameworks to help design sustainability policy (Nechodom 2005)
2. We are currently updating the constraints and resources of a policy subsystem.
3. The permanent population in the Basin grew from less than 20,000 prior to 1960 to 55,000 in 1998 (USDA, 2000, 607–608). From 1960 to 1980, the number of homes in the Basin increased from 500 to 19,000 units, and Tahoe's population reached 60,000 people by the end of the century (Kauneckis et al. 2000; Elliot-Fisk et al. 1996).
4. Following Hecl (1978) and Kingdom (1994), the ACF sets itself apart from traditional conceptions of policy participants (e.g., iron triangles) to include journalists and researchers/scientists.
5. An example of a neoclassical conservative deep core belief scale found in Sabatier and Zafonte (2005) includes the following four statements asked on 7-point scales with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree:
 - a. "A first consideration of any good political system is the protection of property rights."
 - b. "The best government is the one that governs the least."
 - c. "Government planning almost inevitably results in the loss of essential liberties and freedoms."
 - d. "The 'welfare state' tends to destroy individual initiative."
6. An example of a policy core belief scale for the Lake Tahoe environmental policy subsystem includes the following three statements (asked on 7-point scale with 1 = Strongly Disagree and 7 = Strongly Agree):
 - a. "We cannot afford to let policies claiming to promote 'environmental quality' prevent the continued economic development of the Basin."
 - b. "Protection of water quality requires that regulations be rigorously enforced, even when they create hardships for property owners. (question reversed on scale)."
 - c. "There is too much concern for restricting growth in the Basin and not enough concern for encouraging it."
7. Examples of secondary beliefs that were asked on a recent questionnaire to policy participants in the Lake Tahoe Basin include the following policy proposals (asked on 7-point scale with 1 = Strongly Disagree and 7 = Strongly Agree):
 - a. "Sharply increasing the miles of shore line available for public beaches and use."
 - b. "Prohibiting all housing development on high hazard lots (i.e., those won steep slopes o in stream environment zones)."
 - c. "Banning off-road vehicles (ORVs) from use on public lands in the Basin."

8. Weible and Sabatier (2005) and Weible (2005) used network data to show that policy core beliefs structure coordination networks into at least two advocacy coalitions.
9. A systematic network analysis of the policy participants in the Tahoe Basin is forthcoming.
10. This is one of the areas of the ACF that needs theoretical and empirical refinement.
11. In former versions of the ACF, venues were formally called guidance instrument. This is another area within the ACF that needs theoretical and empirical refinement.
12. The ACF assumes that policies are translations of stakeholder beliefs. The policy core beliefs of a coalition are translated into policy core aspects of a policy subsystem. Similarly, a coalition's secondary beliefs are translated into secondary aspects of a policy subsystem. Just as coalition structure and individual beliefs remain stable for periods of a decade or more so do policies in a subsystem.
13. We have yet connected the belief changes from 1984 to 2001 to policy change.
14. Critiques and a defense of stages heuristic can be found in Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, (1993) and Deleon (1999), respectively.

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