

Juggling Multiple Networks in Multiple Streams

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Abstract

This paper suggests a new conceptual gaze at theorizing the policy process. Alternating between practical, empirical, and theoretical perspectives, we describe how the hybridization of Multiple Streams, Policy Network, and Frame theories leads to a juggling metaphor to describe the process. From the initiation of this research program, we found that the information our research yielded was vastly more complex and dynamic than what is generally reported in similar research. In particular we discovered that dynamic interactions between actors in the different (policy, problem, and politics) streams, when appraised through a policy network lens, produce different network configurations in each stream. We also found that Kingdon's "Policy entrepreneurs" are likely to engage more in shaping the problem stream network configuration (through the process Kingdon labels "alternative specification" —which requires great perspicacity with words) than in the other streams. We therefore postulate that hybridization of policy network theory with Multiple Streams theory would create a more powerful conceptual toolbox. is toolbox can be enhanced further by insights from network management

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conceptualisations and frame theory. Finally, we have embraced the criticism that has been voiced of the stages heuristic and proposes that a more useful metaphor for policy processes is juggling: those processes may appear chaotic, but keen discipline, coordination, and acuity are required for policy students and operators to keep all balls in the air.

Keywords: *Networks, multiple streams, theory, policy process, health*

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