







# Policy entrepreneurship on the street-level: A systematic literature review

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## Abstract

What are the differences between policy entrepreneurship and street-level policy entrepreneurship? The research on street-level policy entrepreneurship is still in its infancy, yet in the past few years, it has received greater research attention. This article systematically reviews the current research published on this topic and compares it to previous findings on policy entrepreneurs. Our findings provide an analysis of street-level policy entrepreneurs' characteristics, motivations, traits, and strategies, differentiating types of street-level bureaucrats (SLBs). We also find three new strategies unique to SLBs: consistency over time, learning from others, and seeking legitimacy. We conclude by identifying the main differences between traditional entrepreneurs and street-level entrepreneurs and providing suggestions for further research.

## KEYWORDS

policy entrepreneurship, street-level bureaucracy, street-level policy entrepreneurship, systematic literature review

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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the public administration literature has examined the influence of both street-level bureaucrats (SLBs) and policy entrepreneurs on policy outcomes in various policy domains. While SLBs influence policy outcomes mainly through *implementation* practices (Lipsky, 2010), policy entrepreneurs affect outcomes by influencing the *formation* of policies (Kingdon, 1995; Mintrom & Norman, 2009).

More recently, scholars have begun examining SLBs who act as policy entrepreneurs (Arnold, 2021; Cohen, 2021; Cohen & Aviram, 2021; Frisch Aviram et al., 2021). While there is a growing body of literature addressing this topic, the similarities and differences between traditional policy entrepreneurs and street-level entrepreneurs have not been systematically studied. This article aims to address this gap in the literature by systematically comparing the two forms of policy entrepreneurship to promote our understanding of this phenomenon.

To accomplish this goal, we conducted a systematic review of the articles dealing with street-level policy entrepreneurship from 1984 to 2021, resulting in 15 papers. We then analyzed these articles to identify the unique characteristics and coping strategies of SLBs and how they differ from other policy entrepreneurs. Finally, we compared our findings with those of Frisch Aviram et al. (2020), who conducted a systematic literature review to identify the characteristics and strategies of traditional policy entrepreneurs.

Exploring the differences between policy entrepreneurship and street-level policy entrepreneurship will contribute to the literature in two ways. First, we fill the gap in the literature about the distinction between traditional policy entrepreneurs and street-level policy entrepreneurs. While previous studies provided an important systematic review of policy entrepreneurs' strategies (e.g., Frisch Aviram et al., 2020), we must identify and examine SLBs' specific strategies, traits, and motivations. By focusing on a specific entrepreneur group that differs in its characteristics and strategies from other types of entrepreneurs, we can propose key insights on the uniqueness of SLBs in this context. We hope that our findings will assist researchers interested in this developing field by identifying gaps in the literature and by providing directions for future research.

Second, we add to the knowledge about how street-level workers influence the design of the policies they are supposed to implement and the strategies they use for doing so. Thus, we also contribute to the literature on policy implementation, which has demonstrated that the coping strategies that SLBs develop are indeed an integral part of the translation of public policy into reality.

In the next section, we will review the theory on the characteristics, strategies, and areas of activity of street-level policy entrepreneurship. In addition, we will propose a comparison between different types of SLBs in how they use their discretion as part of their entrepreneurship behavior. We will then present our method, which includes an explanation of the data collection process and coding methods. Finally, we will report our findings indicating the main characteristics and strategies of street-level policy entrepreneurship and compare them with those of traditional policy entrepreneurs. We will also discuss the differences between the two groups.

## 2 | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Over the last decades, scholars from public administration have investigated how SLBs and policy entrepreneurs shape policy outcomes in different ways. Lipsky (2010) noted that SLBs do so by making decisions about how to allocate resources while they implement policy. Others

regard policy entrepreneurs as those seeking to influence policy outcomes by shaping how the policy is formulated (Kingdon, 1995; Mintrom & Norman, 2009; Petridou & Mintrom, 2021). Although these studies have addressed different analytical dimensions and various policy domains, only recently have scholars begun to link street-level bureaucracy and policy entrepreneurship (Arnold, 2021; Cohen, 2021).

## 2.1 | Policy entrepreneurs

The research agenda on policy entrepreneurship has expanded, as a considerable amount of research has focused on the role that individuals play in policymaking. Four major theories emerged, each emphasizing their important role in driving policy change: the multiple-stream model (Kingdon, 1984), the punctuated equilibrium theory (Baumgartner & Jones, 2002), the advocacy coalition framework (Sabatier, 1988), and the network management approach (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000). These theories led to further research, with increasing analytical and empirical efforts (Petridou & Mintrom, 2021).

Policy entrepreneurs are often defined as individuals who capitalize on windows of opportunities to influence policy outcomes to promote their personal goals (Mintrom, 2000). Despite lacking the necessary resources to achieve these goals independently, they employ unconventional strategies and innovative ideas to shape policy outcomes according to their preferences (Cohen, 2021).

These individuals can be found in various sectors, including the public, third, or private sector (Frisch Aviram et al., 2020). A key characteristic they share is their readiness to invest different resources with the expectation of future returns (Mintrom, 2000). Similar to business entrepreneurs aiming to maximize personal economic benefits, policy entrepreneurs strive to achieve their personal objectives by addressing collective action problems (Cohen, 2021). While their primary focus is often on altering the status quo and driving policy change, they may also employ entrepreneurial tactics to block proposed policy changes put forth by others. Therefore, acknowledging their vital role becomes essential in comprehending and explaining policy outcomes fully.

Policy entrepreneurs actively participate in all stages of the policy cycle, including agenda setting, policy formation, policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy evaluation (Cohen, 2012, 2021; Mintrom & Luetjens, 2017; Mintrom & Norman, 2009). However, their influence is typically most pronounced in the initial two stages. While these attempts can bear fruit, sometimes, from various reasons, they fail (Cohen & Naor, 2017). It is crucial to remember that policy entrepreneurship represents just one form of political participation. It involves individuals who are willing to take calculated risks, identify policy issues and potential solutions, and effectively utilize timing and political astuteness to achieve their desired results (Cohen, 2021).

Scholars have shown that not just political elites or top-level managers engage in policy entrepreneurship practices. Bureaucrats including mid-level and low-level bureaucrats also engage in creative actions designed to influence the formation of policies (Aberbach et al., 1981; Arnold, 2015; Cavalcante et al., 2018; Lavee & Cohen, 2019). However, we still lack a systematic and comparative understanding of the characteristics of policy entrepreneurs and the various strategies they use when it comes to policy entrepreneurship among SLBs.

## 2.2 | Street-level bureaucracy

SLBs are frontline workers who interact with the public regularly as they implement public policies (Lipsky, 2010). Examples of SLBs are social workers, teachers, health professionals, and police officers. Through their daily interactions with citizens, SLBs translate the state's public policies into concrete actions, providing various kinds of public services to citizens (Brodkin, 2012).

Thus, SLBs have a great deal of discretion in deciding the quality, quantity, and types of resources and services people will receive. SLBs can decide how to implement a certain rule or eligibility criterion, and how they interact with their clients. Given that SLBs have limited resources and face challenges and pressures both from citizens (their clients) and managers, they tend to cope with the demands of their job in various ways (Brodkin & Majmundar, 2010; Lipsky, 2010; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003). Factors that influence their decisions and coping strategies include their personal characteristics, organizational factors, and the environment in which they operate (Brodkin, 2012; Cohen, 2018). Some of these factors may also affect their decision to engage in entrepreneurial practices.

## 2.3 | Policy entrepreneurship among SLBs

SLBs are seen as central players in the policy-making process, as they “informally construct or reconstruct their organizations' policies” (Cohen, 2021, p. 1) through their discretionary practices. However, when it comes to SLBs' actions as policy entrepreneurs, their possible impact or influence on policy outcomes is rather understudied (Cohen, 2021, p. 8). Indeed, it is difficult to conduct research on SLBs and policy entrepreneurship because it requires both a deeper understanding of the specific contextual dynamics of policy implementation and their interaction with policy outcomes and macrolevel processes. Additionally, many existing studies on policy entrepreneurship have focused on high-level bureaucrats. Fewer studies have addressed the influence of SLBs in the policy processes (Arnold, 2015).

Scholars have already studied how SLBs can change or have some influence on the outcomes of already existing policies. Lipsky (2010), for instance, explored how SLBs, such as teachers, social workers, and police officers, can be creative in implementing policy when they interact with citizens. Other scholars (Arnold, 2015; Durose, 2007; Petchey et al., 2008) also investigated SLBs' entrepreneurial actions in areas such as environmental policy. However, they all focused on already existing policies that SLBs were required to implement.

Nevertheless, recent studies have provided new empirical evidence suggesting that SLBs can also influence the design of policy, not just its implementation, through entrepreneurship strategies. These studies have documented that SLBs can engage in entrepreneurial practices such as building coalitions with state and nonstate actors at different governmental levels, disseminating knowledge and information strategically, framing problems creatively, and crafting alternative policy solutions (Cohen, 2021; Cohen & Golan-Nadir, 2020; Frisch Aviram et al., 2018, 2021; Lavee & Cohen, 2019).

The public administration literature on entrepreneurship emphasizes distinct aspects regarding the concept, maintaining that it is one form of political participation. There are other types of entrepreneurial behavior that are beyond the scope of this research (see Cohen, 2021 for further elaboration). One example in the context of bureaucracies is guerrilla government (O'Leary, 2010). This concept differs from policy entrepreneurship in that guerrilla government

is about avoiding going public with one's concerns for strategic reasons. Those who adopt this tactic work behind the scenes to accomplish their goals. In contrast, the activities of street-level policy entrepreneurs designed to influence and change policy are explicit (Lavee & Cohen, 2019).

It is important to note that the very characteristics of SLBs may lead them to embrace or refrain from engaging in policy entrepreneurship. Recent evidence suggests that the practices of SLB policy entrepreneurs may differ from those used by other types of policy entrepreneurs. SLBs are known for having specific characteristics. First, their space for autonomous and discretionary action is limited due to their relatively lower position in the hierarchy of governmental organizations (Lipsky, 2010). Second, SLBs must deal with competing and sometimes contradictory pressures and demands from both their managers and their clients, in contexts often characterized by a scarcity of resources and time (Hill & Hupe, 2014; Lipsky, 2010). Third, SLBs tend to have less access to the information that decision makers at higher levels use to make decisions. They also have less access to politicians and top managers in the organizations (Lavee & Cohen, 2019). Finally, they are rarely involved formally in the design and formulation of policy (Hill & Hupe, 2014).

Nevertheless, when it comes to policy entrepreneurship, SLBs have several advantages. First, they are on the frontlines and know what their clients need (Arnold, 2015; Cohen, 2021; Riccucci, 2005). Second, given their professional training or specialized knowledge, they can easily identify policy gaps and opportunities for proposing solutions. Third, they are well-positioned to run local pilot tests because they interact with a broad range of local actors (Meijerink & Huitema, 2010). Fourth, SLBs are also well-positioned to mobilize support for and build coalitions because they are part of the governmental agencies, but they also interact with citizens. Thus, their ties inside and outside government enable them to suggest solutions and mediate or build consensus among very different groups (Arnold, 2015; Cohen, 2021; Hysing & Olsson, 2018; Olsson & Hysing, 2012). Finally, unlike politicians or political appointees who face constant turnover, SLBs tend to remain in their positions for longer periods of time (Cohen, 2021; Lipsky, 2010). This factor could prove important when it comes to their decisions about whether to engage in policy entrepreneurship (Arnold, 2021).

Cohen and Aviram (2021) provided a brief, initial comparison between general policy entrepreneurs and street-level policy entrepreneurs. The authors identified differences between them in terms of policy sector, government level, characteristics, and strategies. First, while general policy entrepreneurs tend to act at different governmental levels (local, regional, national, transnational and cross-level), street-level policy entrepreneurs tend to focus their actions mainly at the local level and, secondarily, at the regional or national level. Second, while general policy entrepreneurs tend to propose new solutions to promote policy change, street-level policy entrepreneurs tend to suggest possible alternatives that solve an acute crisis or implementation problem (Lavee & Cohen, 2019). Third, street-level policy entrepreneurs are more inclined to use their discretion and professional knowledge to promote change, while general policy entrepreneurs tend to rely mainly on networking and team building (Cohen & Aviram, 2021).

However, given that the studies on policy entrepreneurship among street level-bureaucrats are just beginning, we still lack a systematic understanding of the main characteristics and differences between general policy entrepreneurs and street-level policy entrepreneurs' practices or contexts. Thus, the main research question that underlies our investigation is: What are the differences between policy entrepreneurship and street-level policy

entrepreneurship? Following Frisch Aviram et al. (2020), we will answer this question by examining six questions derived from it:

- (1) In which policy fields and sectors are street-level policy entrepreneurs active?
- (2) Are street-level policy entrepreneurs individual players or group players?
- (3) What are the main traits of street-level policy entrepreneurs?
- (4) What factors motivate street-level policy entrepreneurs?
- (5) What strategies do street-level policy entrepreneurs use?
- (6) What are the differences in the use of street-level policy entrepreneurship strategies among different types of SLBs?

To fill this gap, we identified research in the area from 1984 to 2021 and used these studies to attempt to address some of these issues.

### 3 | METHOD

For the systematic review, we used the “Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis” (PRISMA) framework (Moher & PRISMA Group\*, 2009), a well-accepted procedure to ensure replicability and transparency in systematic reviews. We describe our methodology in two stages: search strategy and coding process (Appendix A).

#### 3.1 | Search strategy

Following authors of previous systematic reviews of the public administration literature (e.g., Jones et al., 2016; Tummers et al., 2015), we searched for articles in two academic databases and search engines: The ISI Web of Science and the Google Scholar database. The ISI Web of Science database allowed us to identify peer-reviewed journal articles in as many research domains as possible. We used the search term “policy entrepreneur” OR “policy entrepreneurship” AND (street-level) OR Bureauc\*. This search yielded 21 papers. The Google Scholar database added other journal articles, book chapters, conference papers, and dissertations to the 21 papers from the ISI Web of Science search (Tummers et al., 2015). We used the term “policy entrepreneur” OR “policy entrepreneurship” AND (street-level) OR Bureauc\*. This search yielded 63 studies. To complement the search, following the common method of analyzing citations of major publications on the topic of the review (Jones et al., 2016; Tummers et al., 2015), we examined all articles quoting the 2018 paper “Low-Level Bureaucrats, Local Government Regimes and Policy Entrepreneurship,” which focuses on SLBs as policy entrepreneurs. This search yielded 41 papers.

As a result of these three searches, we had 125 papers. In the next step, we screened these articles' titles and abstracts and kept only those that were (a) not duplicates; (b) published between 1984 and 2022; (c) published in the English language; (d) published in an international peer-reviewed journal; (e) contained the exact term “policy entrepreneur\*” in their titles or their abstracts; and (f) focused on SLBs. After applying these criteria to our data set, we were left with 18 articles for a full-text review. After reading the full texts, we excluded three additional papers. Two papers did not focus on SLBs as policy entrepreneurs, and one paper



was only a review of SLBs' policy entrepreneurship with no empirical case. Thus, our final data set had 15 articles, which are reviewed briefly in Table 1.

### 3.2 | Coding process

For the coding process, we used an existing coding book (see Appendix B) of policy entrepreneurs' characteristics and strategies (Frisch Aviram et al., 2020). This approach allowed us to analyze street-level policy entrepreneurship and compare it to general policy entrepreneurship.

Two coders coded all papers to ensure inter-coder reliability, and the mean intercoder reliability (ICR) was above 90%. When issues and dilemmas arose, the two authors who coded the data discussed the disagreement until an agreement was reached. The final findings are reported based on the agreement reached.

## 4 | FINDINGS

### 4.1 | Fields and sectors

According to the studies we examined, SLBs engage in policy entrepreneurship in five fields (see Table 2): health, welfare, education, environment, and governance. As the table demonstrates, 26% of the articles reviewed reported of street-level entrepreneurs who dealt with policies related to health (Golan-Nadir, 2021; Masood & Nisar, 2022); 26% with those related to education (Chand & Misra, 2009; Sadan & Alkaher, 2021); 20% with social welfare and social work (Aviv et al., 2021; De Corte et al., 2019); and 13% with environmental policy (Arnold, 2015) and governance (Durose, 2011). We did not find evidence of street-level policy entrepreneurship in the other fields that Frisch Aviram et al. (2020) identified.

There are several explanations for the low levels of policy entrepreneurship practices in certain fields. First, the current findings rely mainly on articles that focus on caring professions such as teachers, health professionals and social workers (e.g., Gofen et al., 2021; Sadan & Alkaher, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). As the literature suggests, in some fields policy entrepreneurship is, to some extent, part of the SLBs' mission (Lavee & Cohen, 2019). For example, the notion of policy practice refers to the engagement of social workers in the policy arena (Jansson, 1994). The literature suggests that, in this line of work, organizations support, encourage, and even demand that social workers engage in policy entrepreneurship (Lavee & Cohen, 2019). Furthermore, helping their clients, even by fighting to change problematic policies, is part of the professional discourse of their profession, and is ingrained through the educational process of becoming a social worker (Gal & Weiss-Gal, 2015). This emphasis contrasts with other fields, such as policing and law enforcement (that do not appear in our review), in which SLBs are not expected or encouraged to act as policy entrepreneurs. Furthermore, previous research demonstrates that they see their role as enforcers of the law, not as service providers who are in charge of their clients' well-being. Indeed, they resent the notion of citizens as clients that the New Public Management ideology has imposed on them (Edri-Peer & Cohen, 2023).

Second, the research interest in street-level policy entrepreneurship is in its infancy. The first article in our analysis was published in 2009 (Chand & Misra, 2009), and 9 out of

TABLE 1 Articles included in the review.

Article	Authors	Journal	Year	Policy domain	Country	Type of analysis	Research tools
Teachers as educational-social entrepreneurs: The innovation-social entrepreneurship spiral	Vijaya Sherry Chand and Sasi Misra	<i>The Journal of Entrepreneurship</i>	2009	Education	India	Qualitative	Case-study description
Top-down policy implementation and social workers as institutional entrepreneurs: The case of an electronic information system in Belgium	Joris De Corte, Jochen Devlieghere, Griet Roets and Rudi Roose	<i>British Journal of Social Work</i>	2019	Welfare	Belgium	Qualitative	Interviews
Revisiting Lipsky: Front-Line work in UK local governance post	Catherine Durose	<i>Political Studies</i>	2011	Local governance	United Kingdom	Qualitative	Interviews, textual analysis
Teacher education and the GERM: policy entrepreneurship, disruptive innovation and the rhetorics of reform	Viv Ellis, Sarah Steadman & Tom Are Trippstad	<i>Educational Review</i>	2019	Education	England	Qualitative	Textual, audio and video analysis
Development and formation of ESE policy: learning from teachers and local authorities	Naama Sadan & Iris Alkahaer	<i>Environmental Education Research</i>	2021	Education	Israel	Qualitative	Textual analysis, interviews, observations
Street-level bureaucrats as policy entrepreneurs: Action strategies for flexible community governance in China	Liwei Zhang, Ji Zhao, Weiwei Dong	<i>Public Administration</i>	2021	Community governance	China	Qualitative	Observations, interviews
How policy entrepreneurship training affects policy entrepreneurship behavior among street-level bureaucrats - a randomized field experiment	Frisch-Aviram, Neomi; Beeri, Itai; Cohen, Nissim	<i>Journal of European Public Policy</i>	2021	Health	Israel	Quantitative	Experiment



TABLE 1 (Continued)

Article	Authors	Journal	Year	Policy domain	Country	Type of analysis	Research tools
Working through the fog of a pandemic: Street-level policy entrepreneurship in times of crises	Gofen, Anat; Lotta, Gabriela; Marchesini da Costa, Marcelo	<i>Public Administration</i>	2021	Health	Brazil	Qualitative	Interviews, textual analysis
Distinguishing the street-level policy entrepreneur	Arnold, Gwen	<i>Public Administration</i>	2021	Environmental	United States	Qualitative	Interviews, textual analysis, case-study description, observations
The role of interorganizational competition in motivating street-level bureaucrats to adopt policy entrepreneurship strategies: The case of Israeli rabbis in government hospitals	Golan-Nadir, Niva	<i>American Review of Public Administration</i>	2021	Health	Israel	Mixed methods	Interviews, textual analysis, survey
Street-level policy entrepreneurship	Arnold, Gwen	<i>Public Management Review</i>	2015	Environmental	United States	Qualitative	Interviews, observations, case-study description
From the bottom-up: Probing the gap between street-level bureaucrats' intentions of engaging in policy entrepreneurship and their behavior	Frisch Aviram, Neomi; Beeri, Itai; Cohen, Nissim	<i>American Review of Public Administration</i>	2021	Health, Education	Israel	Quantitative	Survey
How street-level bureaucrats become policy entrepreneurs: The case of urban renewal	Lavee, Einat; Cohen, Nissim	<i>Governance</i>	2019	Social work, Welfare	Israel	Qualitative	Interviews, textual analysis, case-study description, focus groups

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Article	Authors	Journal	Year	Policy domain	Country	Type of analysis	Research tools
Repairing the state: Policy repair in the frontline bureaucracy	Masood, Ayesha; Nisar, Muhammad Azfar	<i>Public Administration Review</i>	2022	Health	Pakistan	Qualitative	Interviews, observations
Social workers as street-level policy entrepreneurs	Aviv, Inbal; Gal, John; Weiss-Gal, Idit	<i>Public Administration</i>	2021	Social work, Welfare	Israel	Qualitative	Interviews, textual analysis, case-study description

**TABLE 2** Distribution of the characteristics of street-level policy entrepreneurship and traditional policy entrepreneurs.

	Frequency among street-level policy entrepreneurs (N = 15)	Frequency among traditional policy entrepreneurs (N = 229)
<b>Policy fields</b>		
Agriculture	0 (0%)	2 (0.9%)
Arts	0 (0%)	2 (0.9%)
Defense	0 (0%)	15 (6.6%)
Economics	0 (0%)	26 (11.4%)
Education	4 (26%)	31 (13.5%)
Environment	2 (13%)	55 (24%)
Foreign relations	0 (0%)	10 (4.4%)
Governance	2 (13%)	28 (12.2%)
Health	4 (26%)	29 (12%)
Planning	0 (0%)	5 (2.2%)
Technology	0 (0%)	7 (3.1%)
Transportation	0 (0%)	2 (0.9%)
Welfare	3 (20%)	17 (7.4%)
<b>Sector</b>		
Public	13 (86%)	114 (51.6%)
Private	4 (26%)	15 (6.8%)
Third	1 (0.6%)	21 (9.5%)
<b>Individuals or groups</b>		
Individual policy entrepreneur	5 (33%)	87 (38%)
Group policy entrepreneur	4 (26%)	68 (29.7%)
Individual and group	5 (33%)	74 (32.3%)
<b>Type of SLB</b>		
Teacher	4 (26%)	
Social worker	4 (26%)	
Health professional	4 (26%)	
Other	6 (40%)	
<b>Motivations</b>		
Self-interest	4 (26%)	
Public interest	13 (86%)	

Note: Data source on traditional policy entrepreneurs: Frisch Aviram et al. (2020).

15 articles were written in the past 2 years. The relatively small number of articles that we rely on in this systematic review suggests that there may be other fields relevant to street-level policy entrepreneurship that have yet to be studied. Further research is necessary to determine in which fields street-level policy entrepreneurship is truly more common. Furthermore, our analysis indicates that only one study has compared two types of policy domains (Frisch-Aviram et al., 2021). Further use of a comparative research design among different types of domains is needed to improve our understanding of this phenomenon (Béland & Howlett, 2016).

As for sectors, Roberts and King (1991) claimed that policy entrepreneurs are outside actors, but Kingdon (1984) maintained that they could be found in and out of government. SLBs are the frontline workers of the *public* sector. Nevertheless, the literature acknowledges that *private* sector and *third* sector street-level workers also qualify as SLBs (Cohen et al., 2016; Hupe, 2022). Unsurprisingly, our findings show that entrepreneurship can be found in all three sectors but is most common in the public sector. Thirteen of the articles referred to public sector employees (Arnold, 2021; Gofen et al., 2021). Four also sampled private sector employees (Ellis et al., 2019; Masood & Nisar, 2022) and only one had a representation of third sector workers in its sample (Frisch Aviram et al., 2021). These results correspond with the findings about traditional policy entrepreneurs (Frisch Aviram et al., 2020).

## 4.2 | Team players or individual players?

The literature on policy entrepreneurship maintains that entrepreneurs are individuals who are “central in moving a subject up the agenda” (Kingdon, 1984, p. 180). Frisch Aviram et al. (2020) showed that sometimes, entrepreneurship can be a group activity. Our findings agree. They demonstrated that SLBs are more likely than regular entrepreneurs to be group actors. While previous research on policy entrepreneurship suggests that it is more of an individual activity (Frisch Aviram et al., 2020), our findings show that policy entrepreneurship among SLBs occurs on both levels. Table 2 indicates that 33% of the articles analyzed included individual policy entrepreneurs (Arnold, 2021; Golan-Nadir, 2021) and 26% included group policy entrepreneurs (Gofen et al., 2021). Furthermore, 33% of the studies dealt with both types of policy entrepreneurs (Aviv et al., 2021; Frisch Aviram et al., 2021).

This finding is somewhat surprising, as SLBs are low in the hierarchy of decision making (Lipsky, 2010), and their ability to move things along as individual players is limited. Nevertheless, policy entrepreneurs are often described as individuals who further policy change because they have the ability to exploit opportunities due to their knowledge and power (Cairney, 2018). Thus, SLBs who engage in policy entrepreneurship possess an understanding of the bureaucratic context and the needs of those within it, allowing them to promote their initiatives alone, even though they lack actual political power (Aviv et al., 2021).

## 4.3 | Motivations

What motivates SLBs to become policy entrepreneurs? The literature on policy entrepreneurship suggests that the primary motivation for entrepreneurship is self-interest (Cohen, 2021). Entrepreneurs seek to promote their personal goals by addressing problems related to collective

action (Cohen & Naor, 2013). Nevertheless, even if the motivation is self-interest, the outcomes may be positive for society (Arieli & Cohen, 2013).

Ascribing unselfish motivations to street-level policy entrepreneurship differs somewhat from the common image of policy entrepreneurship as self-serving and self-interested (Cohen, 2016). Indeed, our findings suggest that SLBs differ from other types of entrepreneurs in that they are generally motivated by the desire to promote and improve the public's interests. A large majority of the articles in our analysis—86%—referred to SLBs' motivation to act to help their clients and benefit society. For example, using ethnographic data from Punjab, Pakistan, Masood and Nisar (2022) demonstrated that SLBs' entrepreneurship was client-centered, and motivated by their compassion and kindness. Only 26% of the articles identified self-interest, such as the desire to defend oneself, as a motivation (Arnold, 2021; Gofen et al., 2021).

This finding is quite interesting, as the street-level bureaucracy literature itself presents mixed conclusions about the motivations of SLBs. On one hand, SLBs are public servants who are devoted to helping their clients. They are described as the “miners” of public policy; they dirty their hands for society and are sometimes even willing to risk their jobs to aid citizens they believe worthy (Lavee, 2022; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003). On the other hand, the never-ending demand for public services leads to their use of coping strategies (Davidovitz & Cohen, 2022) aimed at “minimizing the danger and discomfort of the job and maximizing income and personal gratification” (Lipsky, 2010, p. 18). Our findings suggest that when SLBs go above and beyond their role as implementers and engage in policy entrepreneurship, they do so primarily with the goal of improving public goods and services, and the welfare of society.

#### 4.4 | Traits

The analysis of entrepreneurship is often divided into two categories: the entrepreneurs' traits and their strategies (Cohen, 2016; Zahariadis, 2008). Previous research has recognized that these traits determine the success of the entrepreneur (Zahariadis & Exadaktylos, 2016). Studies have discussed three attributes of policy entrepreneurs: their ability to build trust, their social acuity, and their persuasive abilities (Frisch Aviram et al., 2020). According to our analysis, the articles included in this review reported that SLBs who functioned as entrepreneurs had social acuity (73%) and persuasive abilities (66%). Surprisingly, the articles reported they were less inclined to build trust in relationships and support networks (26%) with other actors to promote their initiatives.

#### 4.5 | Strategies and the policy cycle

Based on the thorough systematic review of policy entrepreneurship done by Frisch Aviram et al. (2020), we sought to identify the strategies and attributes of street-level policy entrepreneurs. Previous research has discovered 20 strategies of entrepreneurs and classified them into five categories, based on the stages of the policy cycle: agenda setting, policy formation, policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy evaluation. We found evidence of all of these strategies in the articles we analyzed. Some were more common, and some were less so.

The first stage of the policy cycle is agenda setting. In this stage, the street-level policy entrepreneur identifies the problem, links it to a policy or a solution, and then actively

promotes it. To accomplish this goal, s/he must first try to find a solution and advocate for it in the appropriate channels: 93% of the articles discussed how street-level policy entrepreneurs seek solutions, 86% discussed how they frame the problem, and 46% considered how they shopped for the appropriate venue to promote their solution. For example, Aviv et al. (2021) described three different cases in which social workers offered a solution to a specific problem they encountered. They all had to frame the problem and the solution in a politically acceptable manner, so that the local municipalities would agree to discuss it and make sure that it “remained on the agenda” (p. 460). As for venue shopping, the interviewees in Lavee and Cohen (2019) spoke about the need to act “in the political arena and not just in the local arena” (p. 484).

The second stage is formulating policy. There are a large number of strategies used in this process, ranging from planning strategies to team building strategies (Frisch Aviram et al., 2020). Strategies such as salami tactics, which refers to dividing the policy move into stages (Ackrill et al., 2013) or process planning, meaning, developing a systematic long-term plan (Fiori & Kim, 2011) were much less common.

The literature suggests that SLBs generally prefer “inside” entrepreneurship strategies (Hoefler et al., 2013) linked to the established routines of their agencies and avoid actions that could be interpreted as subversive (Lavee & Cohen, 2019). Street-level policy entrepreneurs are unique, because they are entrepreneurs who are *part* of the agency, and therefore tend to prefer strategies that are aligned with the organization (Aviv et al., 2021). However, there are no outcomes without risks. Indeed, 53% of the articles referred to the willingness of street-level policy entrepreneurs to take risks that could prove costly for them. Furthermore, we found that street-level policy entrepreneurs occasionally turned to the media (53% of the articles) and to the potential beneficiaries of the policy (66% of the articles) for help. For example, Lavee and Cohen (2019) described how in one case street-level policy entrepreneurs created a website for a public campaign and for the residents to use (p. 487). Similarly, Gofen et al. (2021) discussed the extensive use of social media to mobilize different actors and share arguments with the health community, and weekly public meetings to influence public opinion.

When it comes to building teams, creating public involvement is just one of the strategies that street-level policy entrepreneurs use. As mentioned above, working in groups is quite common among street-level policy entrepreneurs, due to their relative lack of influence on policy making (Cohen, 2021). In addition, the articles in this review reported that street-level policy entrepreneurs try to build teams and lead them (60%), create partnerships with actors from different organizations and sectors (80%), and network inside and outside of government (100% and 86%, respectively). Not surprising is the fact that political activation is a less commonly used strategy (26%). As bureaucrats, our entrepreneurs usually prefer to abandon the political route, and use their position within the organization to create networks within the system (Zhang et al., 2021). Aviv et al. (2021) demonstrated how street-level policy entrepreneurs sought to “establish close working relationships within the corridors of power” (p. 462). Their goal was to collaborate with those in other sectors and organizations within this policy domain to gain a better understanding of what was going on in the city. The attempt to collaborate and create coalitions reoccurred in most of the articles we examined (e.g., De Corte et al., 2019; Ellis et al., 2019; Lavee & Cohen, 2019).

The next stage is the policy adoption process. This stage does not include policy entrepreneurship strategies. It involves the decision-making process of the policy makers, based on the strategies the entrepreneurs used before that stage (Frisch Aviram et al., 2020). After a decision has been made to create or adjust a policy, decisions must be made about how to



implement it. In this stage, the entrepreneurs must demonstrate the workability of their plans (Mintrom & Salisbury, 2014). Interestingly, our data suggest that street-level policy entrepreneurs are rarely involved in this stage. Only 33% of our corpus included strategies to ensure the implementation of the policy (Masood & Nisar, 2022; Zhang et al., 2021).

The last stage is the evaluation of the policies. While policy entrepreneurs are considered active throughout the entire process of developing and implementing policy, including its evaluation (Frisch Aviram et al., 2020), interestingly, in only one of the articles we examined were street-level policy entrepreneurs part of the evaluation process (Chand & Misra, 2009). This finding corresponds with the role of SLBs as low-level public servants who rarely participate in the decision-making process (Lipsky, 2010).

#### 4.6 | New strategies

The growing body of research on street-level policy entrepreneurship suggests three new strategies that are unique to this type of entrepreneur: consistency over time, learning from others, and seeking legitimacy. These strategies result from the unique role of SLBs as frontline officials. First, Arnold (2021) suggested the strategy of consistency over time. She noted that entrepreneurs must leverage a brief temporal window of opportunity (Kingdon, 1984) to realize their goals. Given that street-level policy entrepreneurs generally remain in their jobs for a long time, usually longer than political appointees, their presence in their positions provides them with a unique advantage. By exploring several case studies, she demonstrated how consistent leadership is necessary for the entrepreneurship to succeed.

Second, Arnold (2015) presented the strategy of learning from others. The study was conducted in the United States and examined environmental policy entrepreneurship in six different states. The SLBs learned from example by collecting tools suitable for their use and relying on others' experience in the different states. Creating coalitions and distributing information within them is a well-known strategy in the literature on policy entrepreneurship (Lavee & Cohen, 2019). However, SLBs have the unique ability to access information about parallel agencies (e.g., in other states), and use this information to promote policy in their own jurisdiction.

The third new strategy is seeking legitimacy (Aviv et al., 2021). As mentioned above, SLBs differ from other types of entrepreneurs, because they are part of the hierarchical structure of the government. They lack the authority and resources to engage in the policy process alone (Cohen, 2021). Moreover, they need to navigate carefully between their entrepreneurship and their organization. Thus, to minimize risks and maximize the chances of their initiative succeeding, they search for support and legitimacy from their superiors (Table 3).

#### 4.7 | Differences between types of SLBs

Since we had a relatively small number of articles, we were unable to examine the relationships between the variables of the study. Still, we wanted to understand whether different types of SLBs use different types of strategies. Table 4 demonstrates the frequencies of each strategy, divided by the three types of SLBs most studied in the literature about street-level policy entrepreneurship: teachers, social workers, and health professionals. The findings show that all types of SLBs used the strategies of solution seeking and problem framing, but venue shopping

**TABLE 3** New strategies employed by street-level policy entrepreneurs.

	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Consistency over time	Consistent, long-lasting leadership	Most of the staff had been in their positions for a long time After leaving the job, the entrepreneur passed the task to a competent replacement
Learning from others	Using their access to the organizational knowledge and experience of others to promote the initiative	Collecting tools and elements from other agencies
Seeking legitimacy	Seeking validation for the initiative from superiors in the organization	Obtaining the director's approval for the plan Convincing the supervisor to make the initiative part of the department's agenda

was most common among social workers (Lavee & Cohen, 2019). Risk taking and using media coverage were more common among social workers and health professionals (Frisch Aviram et al., 2021). Interestingly, all types of SLBs used networking.

However, social workers seemed to be more inclined to collaborate with others, even with the public (Aviv et al., 2021), while other types of SLBs were less inclined to do so. Moreover, social workers were also more willing to use the strategy of political activation (Zhang et al., 2021). All SLBs were described as having social acuity, and social workers were somewhat more persuasive than other SLBs (Lavee & Cohen, 2019). Health professionals were the most likely to ensure that their plans could be implemented (Gofen et al., 2021; Masood & Nisar, 2022).

## 5 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Our objective in the current study was to examine the differences between policy entrepreneurs and street-level policy entrepreneurs. To accomplish this goal, we compared the results from Frisch Aviram et al. (2020) systematic review of the literature about policy entrepreneurship with those we obtained from our review of the literature on street-level policy entrepreneurship. Specifically, we explored the main characteristics of street-level policy entrepreneurs, the strategies they adopt, as well as the policy areas and sectors in which they operate. We also investigated whether street-level policy entrepreneurs act individually or in groups, the factors that motivate them in these actions, and whether different types of SLBs use different types of entrepreneurial strategies.

Our analysis makes five main contributions to the literature dealing with policy implementation and, specifically, to the street-level policy entrepreneurship literature. First, by answering our main research question, this literature review is the first to compare traditional policy entrepreneurs and street-level policy entrepreneurs. Unlike previous literature that focused on understanding the entrepreneurial strategies adopted by SLBs (Arnold, 2015; Frisch Aviram et al., 2020; Lavee & Cohen, 2019), our findings make it possible

**TABLE 4** Frequency of use of strategies by type of SLB.

	<b>Health professionals (N = 4)</b>	<b>Teachers (N = 4)</b>	<b>Social workers (N = 4)</b>
Strategic use of symbols	0 (0%)	2 (50%)	1 (25%)
Framing the problem	3 (75%)	4 (100%)	4 (100%)
Finding a solution	4 (100%)	4 (100%)	4 (100%)
Venue shopping	1 (25%)	2 (50%)	3 (75%)
Strategic planning	0 (0%)	1 (25%)	2 (50%)
Focusing on the core	0 (0%)	3 (75%)	2 (50%)
Salami tactics	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Risk taking	3 (75%)	2 (50%)	3 (75%)
Using media coverage	3 (75%)	2 (50%)	3 (75%)
Disseminating strategic information	1 (25%)	1 (25%)	4 (100%)
Involving potential beneficiaries	1 (25%)	2 (50%)	4 (100%)
Civic engagement	0 (0%)	1 (25%)	3 (75%)
Team leadership	1 (25%)	3 (75%)	2 (50%)
Forging interorganizational and cross-sectoral partnerships	1 (25%)	3 (75%)	4 (100%)
Networking in government	4 (100%)	4 (100%)	4 (100%)
Networking out of government	1 (25%)	4 (100%)	3 (75%)
Political activation	1 (25%)	0 (0%)	3 (75%)
Amassing evidence to show the workability of their proposals	0 (0%)	2 (50%)	2 (50%)
Boundary work	1 (25%)	0 (0%)	2 (50%)
Participating in evaluation of policies	0 (0%)	1 (25%)	0 (0%)
Trust building	0 (0%)	1 (25%)	1 (25%)
Social acuity	2 (50%)	3 (75%)	4 (100%)
Persuasion	0 (0%)	2 (50%)	4 (100%)

to identify the specific entrepreneurial strategies that SLBs use and differentiate them from those adopted by policy entrepreneurs who do not operate at the street level. Although prior studies distinguished between policy entrepreneurship and street-level policy entrepreneurship (Arnold, 2021), our literature review makes it possible to distinguish between the two based on a systematic analysis of the existing literature.

Second, like previous findings in the literature (Arnold, 2021; Aviv et al., 2021), our analysis highlights that street-level policy entrepreneurs tend to act both individually and collectively as team players. In comparison to regular policy entrepreneurs, who are mainly described as individual players (Frisch Aviram et al., 2020; Kingdon, 1984), our analysis demonstrates that SLBs also tend to be group actors. This finding is reasonable given the location of SLBs in the

hierarchy of the decision-making process (Lipsky, 2010). Their low level makes it difficult for them to promote policy as individual players (Cohen, 2021). Furthermore, as part of a collegial organization, it is easier for them to create such alliances.

Third, we address street-level policy entrepreneurs' motivations. In line with previous findings emphasizing that SLBs act in accordance with the narrative of citizen-agents (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2000), are motivated by the desire to improve the welfare of their clients (Davidovitz, 2022; Lavee, 2022; Tummers & Bekkers, 2014), and use unique entrepreneurial strategies (Lavee & Cohen, 2019), our findings underscore the differences between traditional policy entrepreneurs and street-level policy entrepreneurs. Our finding that they seem to be motivated by the public's interest contrasts with the on-going criticism of street-level policy entrepreneurs as motivated by self-interests that may harm society in the long run (Cohen, 2021). We also demonstrate their characteristics in terms of personal traits, sectors, and policy domains in which they operate, thus answering the next research questions.

Fourth, we answer our question regarding the strategies such entrepreneurs employ. In line with prior studies, our findings also indicate that street-level policy entrepreneurs utilize strategies related to the five stages of the policy cycle: agenda setting, policy formation, policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy evaluation. However, our analysis reveals three new entrepreneurial strategies: (1) consistency over time, (2) learning from others, (3) and the search for legitimacy. Our findings make it possible to test these strategies empirically in diverse cultural, social, and geographical contexts, as well as among street-level policy entrepreneurs operating in various policy areas.

Fifth, we answer our final question by exploring the difference between types of SLBs. Our findings make it possible to identify the entrepreneurial strategies that policy entrepreneurs at the street level from diverse policy areas adopt and compare them. Such a comparative perspective is currently overlooked in the street-level bureaucracy literature (Davidovitz et al., 2021). The literature frequently claims that SLBs are similar in their behaviors (Lipsky, 2010). However, using a comparative analysis, we were able to demonstrate their similarities and differences (Hupe & Buffat, 2014). Further research can develop this approach, which will help us determine which types of street-level professions can be used when generalizing the results of research.

Altogether, our literature review underscores the point that street-level policy entrepreneurs must adapt their initiatives to organizational considerations. This consideration may be an advantage, but it also has a disadvantage for the efforts of street-level policy entrepreneurs (Cohen, 2021). On one hand, they can use the organization to promote initiatives in a unique way compared to traditional entrepreneurs. On the other hand, street-level organizations may limit or prevent policy entrepreneurship because they play a significant role in policy implementation processes.

As with other studies, ours also has its limitations. As mentioned, the research on street-level entrepreneurship is still in its infancy. Therefore, the sample for our analysis was relatively small, making it hard to explore this phenomenon deeply. Furthermore, using the search terms "policy entrepreneur" OR "policy entrepreneurship" might have resulted in relevant studies not being included in our review. Thus, further research on this topic is needed to encompass multiple concepts of or theoretical approaches to this phenomenon. Suggestions for future research can concentrate on questions that remain unanswered. For example, are there other types of SLBs who engage in policy entrepreneurship activity that have not been studied yet? What are the main strategies that these SLBs use? Are there differences between the caring professions such as teachers, health professional and social workers and the

enforcing professions such as police officers when it comes to entrepreneurship? We encourage researchers to pursue these directions and others regarding street-level policy entrepreneurship.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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## APPENDIX A

See Figure A1.

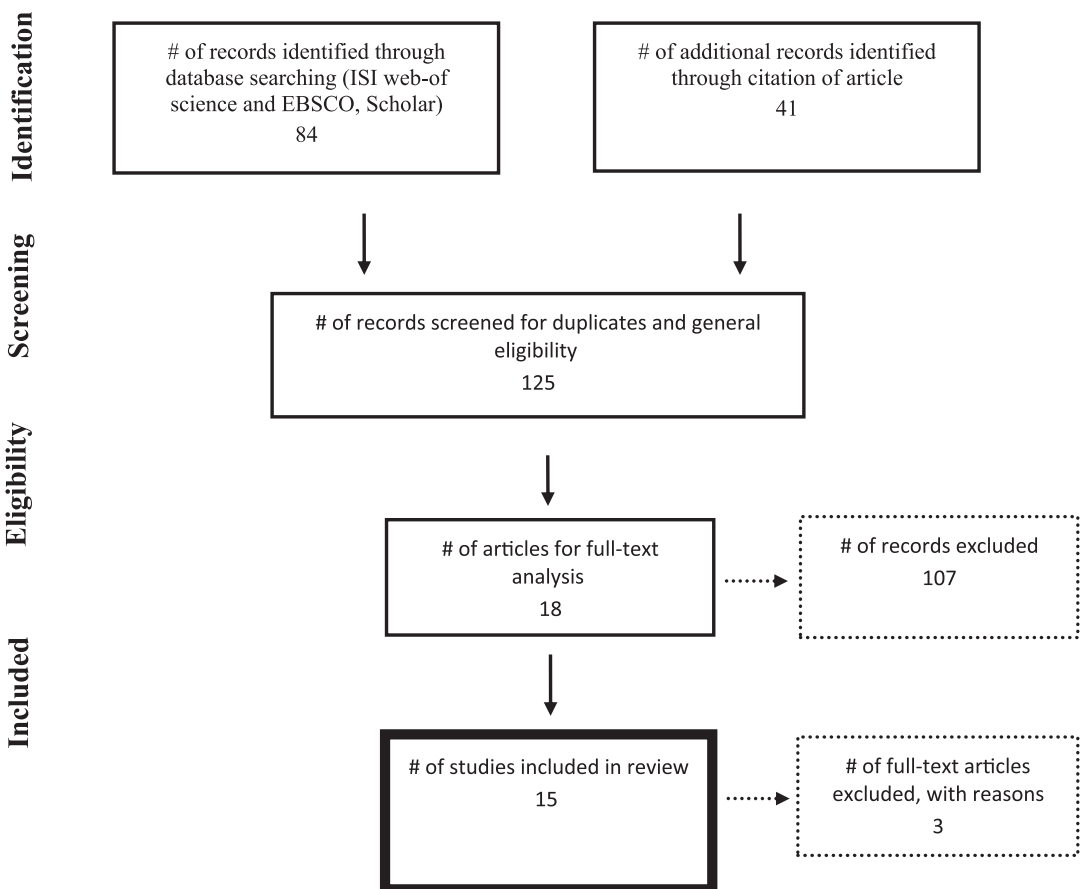


FIGURE A1 PRISMA flow.

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