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Toward a social praxeology of U.S. think tank experts*

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Abstract
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Key words: think tanks • intellectuals • knowledge production • U.S. politics • habitus • field • Pierre Bourdieu

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Drawing on archival records, interviews, and an original database of the educational and career backgrounds of policy experts, this paper develops both an objectivist topography and a constructivist phenomenology of the growing space of American think tanks. Adapting Pierre Bourdieu's notion of field*, I argue that think tanks make up an emergent, constitutively hybrid "proto-field" that traverses, links, and overlaps the divergent worlds of academics, politics, business, and journalism. Think tank-affiliated experts understand their distinctive social role in terms that mirror their intermediate structural location, through the competing idioms of the academic scholar, the policymaker, the business entrepreneur, and the journalist. The study of think tanks destabilizes the category "intellectuals" and thereby challenges the common notion that they are a negligible presence in American politics. Instead, it points to the existence of a highly developed, differentiated, and dynamic – but heteronomous – field of intellectual production.*

INTRODUCTION

Over the last four decades, the intellectual pronouncements of an expanding breed of organization known as "think tanks" have become a fixture of public debate in the United States.[1] Since 1970, as the number of American think tanks has quadrupled (Rich 2004), their affiliated policy specialists have taken on a more visible public role. Think tank representatives commonly testify before Congress (Abelson 2002; McCright and Dunlap 2003), participate in news media debates (Rich and Weaver 2000), and offer policy prescriptions for public consideration (Dickson 1971; Smith 1991; Rich and Weaver 1998). Yet, despite their proliferation and growing visibility, think tanks and their expert staff members have garnered relatively little attention from social scientists, and almost none from sociologists. This paper

[1] A brief genealogy of the term is in order. Dating to the nineteenth century, the phrase "think tank" was originally a colloquial expression for a person's head or brain. The term was first applied to organizations only in the 1950s – and then mostly in an informal manner to refer to ad hoc groups or research centers notable for their high concentration of "brainpower." Even after the term came into common use, its denotation changed considerably. "Think tank" acquired a meaning akin to its current one – i.e., a category of formal organization principally engaged in the production or dissemination of policy research – with the birth of government contract institutes such as the Rand Corporation (established in 1946). The term is thus *historically anachronistic*, post-dating the oldest such organizations by more than half a century, since policy groups originating in the Progressive Era, such as the Brookings Institution (established 1916) and the Council on Foreign Relations (1920), are now commonly recognized as prototypical think tanks.

lays the foundation for an empirically grounded, historically situated, and theoretically armed sociology of American think tanks and policy experts.

Scholarship and commentary on the topic of think tanks typically asks, to paraphrase Donald Abelson's (2002) book title, "Do they matter?" In other words, do think tanks play an instrumental role in producing policy and bounding debate in the United States, or are they merely window dressing in a political process whose center of gravity is located elsewhere? However, analytically prior to this question is a set of more basic unresolved issues – namely, what kind of organizational animals are "think tanks"? And what kind of social animals are their affiliated "policy experts"? My argument, which adapts Pierre Bourdieu's analytical notion of *field* to the present case, runs as follows:

(i) American think tanks occupy an emergent "proto-field," a constitutively hybrid, structurally intermediate system of relations that traverses, links, and overlaps the divergent worlds of politics, academics, business, and journalism. In this peculiar arena of intellectual production, policy specialists vie for control over the means of producing politically relevant expertise. The space of think tanks is notable for its growing boundedness and autonomy from academic production, its structural hybridity and dependence on outside institutions, and its internal differentiation with respect to the forms of power held by policy experts. Its major internal structuring principle is the opposition of academically- versus politically-affiliated experts – "wonks" versus "hacks" in the current vernacular.

(ii) There is a basic correspondence between structure and identity in the world of think tanks. Policy experts understand their distinctive social role in terms that mirror their intermediate location in social space. Lacking an established definition of what it means to be a policy expert,

such actors typically *improvise* one using the ready-made made cultural materials supplied by the more established institutional domains to which they are linked. They draw especially on four competing idioms, those of:

(a) the academic scholar, who must produce authoritative knowledge according to the standards of rigor and autonomy established in the university;

(b) the policymaker, who must make himself intimately familiar with the unique rules of order, procedural details, norms of reciprocity, and temporal rhythms of everyday politics;

(c) the business entrepreneur, who must be an effective "salesperson" in a "marketplace of ideas," and;

(d) the journalist, who must disseminate knowledge in a format that is both accessible and compelling to political actors and the wider public.

Not content to choose just one of these practical models, policy experts share a professional ethos that is predicated on the strenuous triple goal of mastering, juggling, and reconciling all four. Think tank actors seek, in short, to develop a hybrid disposition that incorporates contradictory habits, skills, and sensibilities.

(iii) The study of think tanks destabilizes the category "intellectuals" by underscoring its socially contested nature, and thereby challenges the common assumption that they are a negligible presence in American politics. Instead, it points to the existence of a highly developed, differentiated, and dynamic – but *heteronomous* – field of intellectual production. The emergence and crystallization of a distinct space of think tanks marks the creation of a new structural location in the American field of power from which a stratum of "hybrid intellectuals" take part in public debates.

DATA AND ANALYTICAL STRATEGY

This paper is based on three kinds of empirical data:

(1) Using organizational biographies, personal resumes, and curriculum vitas, I compiled a database of the educational and career backgrounds of the expert staff members (n=1011) at twenty-two major think tanks. These data include previous employment, concurrent professional affiliations, educational degrees attained, and academic disciplines studied.

(2) I examined archival records from fifteen manuscript collections (both organizational and personal) at various historical archives, including those of the Library of Congress, the Brookings Institution, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the American Enterprise Institute, the Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, the Wisconsin Historical Society, and the Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley.[2] Records include the self-accounts of key figures in the field, organizational histories, personal letters and memoirs, mission statements, biographical accounts, and materials concerning the founding and decision-making processes of think tanks.

(3) I conducted 45 in-depth interviews with individuals variously situated throughout American think tanks and proximate institutions. The think tank interview subjects ranged from founders and upper managers to rank-and-file researchers and staff members. I also interviewed people who deal routinely with the work of think tanks, such as Congressional staff members, newspaper and magazine reporters, and administrators of philanthropic foundations.

In combination, I use these data to develop both an objectivist "social topography" and a

[2] I selected these archives because each one contains a sizable repository of data related to think tanks, donor foundations, or individuals who had a hand in founding or managing key think tanks. For example, the Wisconsin Historical Society contains the complete archives of the Institute for Policy Studies, a left-wing think tank. Most of these archives were recommended to me by knowledgeable think tank staff members.

constructivist phenomenology of the space of think tanks. This two-fold analytical strategy is based on the work of Pierre Bourdieu and anchored in the three core concepts of field, habitus, and capital. The approach is notable for its synthesis of objectivist and constructivist epistemologies. It seeks, on the one hand, to uncover the most prominent structural features of this setting – i.e., the patterns of similarity and difference, collaboration and competition, and domination and subordination that supply the principles of its organization, independent of the will or recognition of its inhabitants; on the other hand, it seeks to reconstruct the mental representations of the social actors within the field, or their common categories of perception, appreciation, and action. The paper then inquires into the linkage between these two structural levels by investigating their mutual conditioning.

The "proto-field" of American think tanks

The notion of field is central to this strategy.[3] Based on the twin metaphors of a magnetic field (a space of forces) and a battlefield (a space of struggles), the concept denotes a relatively autonomous, structured social context that both shapes and constrains action. The field concept posits a set of hierarchically ordered positions that are analytically distinct from the actors and organizations who occupy them. In doing so, it functions as a reminder that the core of any social phenomenon is not to be found in the properties of agents or groups, but rather in the *system of relations* in which they are embedded.[4] An analysis of fields must attend to the necessities, constraints, rewards, and penalties operative in the social universe under

[3] A growing research literature makes gainful use of this concept to analyze phenomena as various as homeless services (Emirbayer and Williams 2005), Japanese art (Morishita 2006), agricultural land tenancy (Carolan 2005), classical ballet (Wainwright and Turner 2006), war crime tribunals (Hagan and Levi 2005), journalism (Benson and Neveu, eds. 2005), and romantic love (Becker 2005). For further explication of the field concept, see Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) and Martin (2003).

[4] Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:107) suggest that the field concept is a device meant to "remind us that the true object of social science is not the individual, even though one cannot construct a field if not through individuals."

investigation and the forms of power that act as both weapons and stakes in the social "game" around which the field is constituted.

The chief virtue of the field concept for the present analysis is that it helps us to construct the study's empirical object. In the case of think tanks, this is no easy task. As Simon James (1998:409) observes in his review of Stone (1996), "Discussion of think tanks…has a tendency to get bogged down in the vexed question of defining what we mean by 'think tank' – an exercise which often degenerates into futile semantics." The absence of a clear definition of a think tank is attributable less to a scholastic failing than to the fact that the category's boundary is *one of the stakes of struggle among political actors themselves*. Policy experts battle over the "think tank" designation, which in general carries a symbolic dividend for anyone who can successfully claim it.[5] Consequently, any analysis of think tanks based on a rigid, pre-devised definition would miss one of their key properties – namely, the fact that an organization exists as a think tank only when it succeeds in being recognized as one in the eyes of relevant social actors. The field concept thus has the merit of allowing us to consider an object *whose boundary is at stake inside of the object itself*.[6]

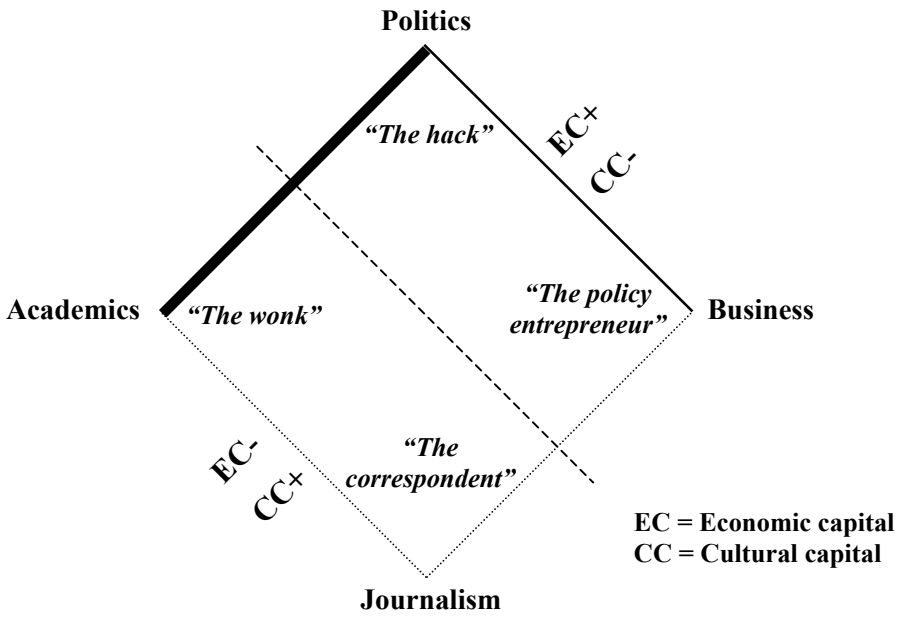
Throughout this paper, I depict the relations among think tanks visually in terms of an analytical space anchored and delimited by the four institutional poles of politics, academics, business, and journalism. Figure 1 is a schematic representation of this "proto-field." The main advantage of this diagram is that it parsimoniously captures several basic propositions about American think tanks. In particular, it is meant to convey the double-sided nature of their

[5] See Rich (2004:13), who notes both "the eager efforts of some interest groups to win the label 'think tank,' for whatever added credibility and stature it might bring their efforts," and the fact that "some think tank leaders are actually reluctant to have their organizations categorized as think tanks" because of the questionable company it puts them in.

[6] See Bourdieu (1988); I thank Loïc Wacquant for this formulation of the point.

existence.[7] On the one hand, think tanks make up a relatively bounded social universe in which policy experts orient their actions toward one another both for the sake of collaboration and competition. There is, in other words, a relational dimension to think tank production, which may therefore be said to have its own specific history, dynamics, and forms of profit. On the other hand, think tanks are the organizational offspring of the more established fields of politics, academics, business, and journalism – the 'parental' ties being at once material and symbolic: *material* because the anchoring institutions provide support, patronage, and personnel to think tanks, *symbolic* because the figures of the policymaker, the academic scholar, the business entrepreneur, and the journalist supply the imaginary models from which policy experts draw in fashioning their "hybrid" self-understandings.

Figure 1: The space of American think tanks



[7] Indeed, one of the major purposes of the field concept is to overcome the false opposition between internalist and externalist analytical modes. See Bourdieu (1985) and Eyal (2005).

The field diagram thus depicts a two-dimensional space of relations in which think tanks and policy experts are differentiated, first, according to their hierarchical standing, and, second, according to the relative composition of their material and cultural power.[8] Owing to its double-sided quality, we can speak of an actor's or an organization's centrality or marginality within the field – or, alternately, of the same actor's proximity to or distance from each of the field's anchoring poles. I distinguish four "polar" kinds of think tank experts – hacks, wonks, policy entrepreneurs, and correspondents – that correspond to each of the four parent institutions. However, because the professional ethos of the policy expert is predicated on the goal of incorporating a set of divergent habits, skills, and sensibilities, the field diagram posits *dispositional hybridity* as a principle of centrality. The think tank field's major internal structuring principle is the opposition of academically- versus politically-affiliated experts – or "wonks" versus "hacks" in the current vernacular. In its current guise, hacks dominate wonks.

AMERICAN THINK TANKS: AN OBJECTIVIST ACCOUNT

What are the most prominent structural features of the think tank "proto-field"? The evidence I present underscores its (1) growing boundedness and autonomy from academic production, (2) institutional hybridity, and (3) internal differentiation with respect to the forms of power held by policy experts. I argue that think tanks occupy an increasingly field-like space, but one that is extensively linked to, and dependent on, the divergent worlds of politics, academics, business, and journalism. Not reducible to any one of these social realms, think tanks nevertheless take on some of the characteristics of each. The analysis lays the groundwork for a

[8] Constructed in this manner, the think tank field maps directly onto Bourdieu's *field of power*, the meta-field in which the holders of various kinds of power seek to create the conditions under which their own form becomes the dominant one (Bourdieu [1989] 1996). In both fields, the basic structuring principle is the opposition of credentials and material resources.

discussion of policy experts' mental categories by examining some of the objective necessities and constraints guiding their intellectual production.

Proliferation and growing boundedness

As previous scholarship has shown, the recent history of think tanks has been marked by considerable growth. According to Rich's (2004:15) count, the number of such organizations increased from about 60 in 1970 to 306 in 1996. Smith (1991:214) similarly notes that, "Of the approximately one hundred policy research groups now in Washington, nearly two-thirds were established after 1970."[9] Such expansion has given rise to increased competition for "dollars, scholars, and influence," as well as to a division of labor among organizations, as indicated by the growing predominance of issue-specific think tanks (McGann 1992). During the same period, think tanks have also become more eager to attract news media attention (Rich and Weaver 2000), more likely to espouse ideological positions (Fischer 1991; Abelson 1995; Rich 2004), and more inclined to produce short, synthetic products on faster schedules, rather than original scholarly research (Weaver 1989).

Less commonly noted is the fact that think tanks occupy an increasingly bounded or "field-like" social universe. The following section traces this historical shift along five dimensions: (i) the increasing relational orientation of think tanks and policy experts; (ii) the emergence of distinctive forms of intellectual production; (iii) the codification of new knowledge about think tanks; (iv) the development of reproduction mechanisms, and; (v) the creation of a new lifestyle and habitus. Together these changes suggest the formation of a distinct space of intellectual production.

[9] Though there is widespread consensus about this proliferation (see also Weaver 1989; McGann 1992), estimates of the number of think tanks vary according to the definition used. McGann's (1992:738) estimate that there are somewhere between 115 and 1400 think tanks in the U.S. further illustrates the fluidity of the category.

(i) Relational orientation. Since the 1970s, think tanks have increasingly taken account of and positioned themselves with respect to one another, both for the sake of competition and collaboration. In 1979, *The Economist* magazine first noted "a growing spirit of rivalry (always, of course, gentlemanly) between Washington's two principal 'think-tanks': the Brookings Institution and the American Enterprise Institute."[10] Three years later, the *New York Times* emphasized the other side of this tendency: "There is much cross-fertilization, or what [IIE president Fred] Bergsten calls 'synergism,' among the senior staff members of the competing institutions. They attend each other's meetings, go to each other's lunches, keep track of each other's studies. There is also some [personnel] crossover."[11]

Evidence of competition and collaboration among think tanks is now ubiquitous. Think tanks compete for funding and news media attention, which are often regarded as prizes in a set of zero-sum competitions. Clyde Prestowitz, founder and president of the Economic Strategy Institute, offers the following recipe for organizational success:

> Well, it is a crowded arena. I think the trick is that you have to have a message or you have to be dealing with issues from an angle that nobody else is. …[T]he first question the donor asks is, 'You know, there are a million think tanks in Washington. Why should I give money to you? How are you guys different from everybody else?'[12]

Think tank managers readily acknowledge their keen awareness of one another. David Boaz, executive vice president of the Cato Institute, enumerates a series of specific considerations:

> We certainly do look at other think tanks to see, is their web site better than ours? More useful? More effective? What can we do to make ours better than that? Are other people getting more notice in talking about a particular issue? Are we doing something wrong? …[W]hy aren't we getting as much attention as they do? If they're doing better

[10] *The Economist*. 1979. "Brookings, flattered by rivals." March 3. p. 43.
[11] *New York Times*. 1982. "No Recession in Ideas at Capital Think Tanks." November 10. B6. The same article quoted Brookings Institution President Bruce MacLaury: "Public policy research is a proliferating industry…. If we believe in competition in the real world, then we'd better believe it for ideas as well." IIE refers to the Institute for International Economics.
[12] Author interview, Clyde Prestowitz, Economic Strategy Institute, July 28, 2003.

> work, then we need to do better work. If they're just doing better public relations, then we need to work on our public relations.[13]

The increased competition between think tanks has been matched by their growing propensity to collaborate. The most durable such ties involve formal linkages and, in some cases, the creation of organizational "offspring." In 1992, for example, the Heritage Foundation established the State Policy Network, a concatenation of affiliated state-level conservative think tanks. In 1998, the American Enterprise Institute and the Brookings Institution joined forces to form the AEI-Brookings Joint Center for Regulatory Studies.[14] And, in 2002, the Urban Institute and Brookings Institution co-founded the Tax Policy Center, a group of experts in tax, budget, and social policy. Less durable, but far more numerous, are the many short-term partnerships that have developed between organizations.[15]

(ii) New forms of intellectual production. During the 1970s and 1980s, think tanks began to establish common criteria of intellectual production and to hammer out a recognizable "product" distinct from academic research. A key example is the near-universal adoption of the short policy memo – known variously as "backgrounder reports," "issue briefs," and "policy briefs" – as the modal genre of intellectual production by think tanks.[16] Such memos, often written according to a standard template with a strong emphasis on brevity, are tailored both in their

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[13] Author interview, David Boaz, Cato Institute, November 24, 2003.
[14] See the organization's charter document, Crandall et al. 1997.
[15] For example, no fewer than eight major think tanks (Brookings, Cato, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Committee for Economic Development, Heritage Foundation, New America Foundation, Progressive Policy Institute, and the Urban Institute), running the full ideological gamut from left to right, co-sponsored a conference called "Restoring Fiscal Sanity – While We Still Can," Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill, Washington, DC, May 18, 2004. A final example of this relational orientation is trivial but nonetheless telling. In 1995, a Washington, DC think tank softball league was formed. See *Washington Post*. 1999. "Think Tanks Discover Life Outside Beltway." July 20. A17.
[16] The Heritage Foundation, in particular, became the major force in pioneering both the production of policy briefs and the corresponding yardstick of its evaluation, the so-called "briefcase test." See Edwards (1997), Rich (2004), and Medvetz (forthcoming).

form and content to the practical needs of politicians and journalists.[17] Some think tanks have formalized their production of policy memos, which are typically modeled after congressional aide briefings, magazine articles, and the "executive summaries" written in the business world, or some combination of these.[18]

A second emergent convention in the think tank world is the practice of preparing transition manuals for incoming presidential administrations. In 1980, the Heritage Foundation led the way with its book *Mandate for Leadership*, a multi-volume set of recommendations for the Reagan administration covering nearly every federal agency and policy area.[19] Heritage's success provided a standard for other think tank officials who wished to put their organizations on the map. "Four years ago, we started a fad," Heritage Foundation official Cathy Ludwig told the *Washington Post* in 1984.[20] By 1988, the *New York Times* had declared transition manuals the new "cottage industry for think tanks," and the *Washington Post* reported that no fewer than 36 policy guides had been written for incoming President George Bush, most by think tanks.[21] Promoted successfully, a transition manual can catapult a think tank into the elite tier of policy research organizations in a relatively short period of time. On the other hand, such projects involve a risky allocation of resources, because if the organization's favored candidate does not

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[17] "We do the research so reporters don't have to," was the title of the Center for American Progress's daily "Progress Report" email on July 7, 2005.

[18] For example, Fred Smith, Jr., founder and president of the Competitive Enterprise Institute, put together the *Field Guide for Effective Communication* (2004) as a reference manual for his staff. Author interview, Fred Smith, Jr., December 16, 2003. Burton Yale Pines, a former associate editor of *Time* magazine and later vice president of the Heritage Foundation, is often credited with developing a template for Heritage's "backgrounder reports." Author interview, James Weidman, June 26, 2003. See also Edwards (1997).

[19] Feulner, ed (1980). See also its sequels, Butler et al., eds. (1984) and Heatherly and Pines, eds. (1989).

[20] *Washington Post*. 1984. "Washington Awash In Think Tanks." December 7. A25. The same article reported that the American Enterprise Institute, the Cato Institute, and the Hudson Institute had released policy documents to coincide with Reagan's second inauguration and the start of the 99th Congress.

[21] *New York Times*. 1988. "Think Tanks; Bush and Aides Getting Advice From All Over." November 21. B10. *Washington Post*. 1988. "Self-Appointed Transition Advisers Push Their Policy Guides." November 14. F25. The latter article states, "Transition fever started with the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank whose 1980 'Mandate for Leadership' was a road map to much of the conservative agenda in Reagan's first term."

win, then the effort is mostly for naught.[22]

Another way in which the work of think tanks has come to differ from that of other intellectual producers is in the considerable weight placed on news media attention as a marker of success. News media "hits" have become a proxy measure of impact that a think tank can bring to its funders as evidence of achievement. Council on Foreign Relations expert Bruce Stokes emphasizes the quantifiability of media citations as the key to their appeal:

> TM: How would you measure the success or failure of a given think tank?
> BS: It's a real challenge…. There's no real way to measure…[so] I think it leads to measuring what's measurable, which is press pickup, for example. You can demonstrate that you've generated so many press stories or so many evening news stories or whatever…. One of the problems in this nebulous environment is that tangible beats intangible often, even if the tangible is arguably not worth very much.[23]

While the tendency of think tanks to seek publicity has often been noted, its import as a marker of distinction from other intellectual producers has rarely been examined.

(iii) Knowledge codification. Another sign of a 'field-like' tendency among U.S. think tanks is the increasing codification of knowledge *about* them, which both signals and reinforces the fact that such organizations occupy a distinct social realm. Examples include the creation of numerous think tank manuals and directories,[24] the publication of books about the business of

[22] For example, Center for American Progress fellow Mark Agrast acknowledged shortly before the 2004 presidential election, "We are working on a [John Kerry] transition document. I don't know that it will be quite as grandiose as [*Mandate for Leadership*]. But certainly we're going to lay out what we consider to be progressive priorities for the administration. It's being written without knowing who is going to be heading that administration and what the composition will be. But, obviously, the opportunity presents itself only if there [is] a change in government." Author interview, Mark Agrast, Center for American Progress, July 27, 2004.

[23] Author interview, Bruce Stokes, *National Journal* and Council on Foreign Relations, June 30, 2003.

[24] The first such effort appears to have been the Heritage Foundation Resource Bank, a project started in 1978. See also the National Institute for Research Advancement's *World Directory of Think Tanks*, first published in 1993. By 2006, NIRA was on the book's fifth edition. Other examples include Day (1993), Hellebust (1996, 2003), and Innis and Johnson (1991).

running a think tank,[25] the existence of a weekly *Washington Post* column about think tanks,[26] and the coordination of strategic conferences and seminars for think tank managers.[27] Knowledge about think tanks has become a purchasable commodity as well, as management consulting firms have carried out studies of think tank characteristics.[28] The small but expanding body of academic literature about think tanks must also be placed under this rubric. In sum, the emergence of "think tank expertise" – by which I mean not policy research itself, but rather knowledge about the development and operation of think tanks – both reflects and helps to bring about their formation as a distinct entity.

(iv) Mechanisms of reproduction. A fourth "field-like" tendency is the emergence of reproduction mechanisms, including internship programs for recruiting future policy experts, media training procedures to teach them to be articulate on television, and, in at least one case, a Ph.D.-granting program.[29] Such mechanisms are significant if and to the degree that they allow think tanks to wrest some autonomy from the university and develop a self-credentialing capacity. Political journalist Joshua Micah Marshall, for example, maintains that a think tank

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[25] Raymond Struyk's (2003) *Managing Think Tanks: Practical Guidance for Maturing Organizations* is based on the author's experience as an adviser to think tanks in Europe and the former Soviet Union. The 276-page book covered a number of common managerial dilemmas faced by think tank officials: how to motivate expert staff members, how to diversify the organization's funding base, how to establish a niche in a crowded "market," and how to communicate the content of one's intellectual agenda to policy actors and the wider public.

[26] "The Ideas Industry," written by *Post* reporters Richard Morin and Claudia Deane, ran from 1999 to 2003. In August 1999, Geoffrey Underwood, a public relations specialist and former Heritage Foundation officer, began publishing the *Think Tanks Network*, a weekly internet newsletter on research by national and state think tanks.

[27] Starting in the late 1990s, the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, a Michigan-based free market think tank, ran a series of twice-annual Leadership Conferences to "afford think tank executives and policy professionals the opportunity to learn new strategies for making their organizations more effective and influential." See http://www.mackinac.org/3456, accessed on July 25, 2006. Mackinac president Lawrence Reed wrote a summary article, published in the Heritage Foundation's *The Insider*, called "Thinking Through a Successful Think Tank."

[28] See, for example, PRM Consulting's (2004) *Research Organizations: 2004 Total Compensation Study*, which includes detailed data on the pay of expert and non-expert staff members at twenty-three think tanks.

[29] The Rand Corporation has a Ph.D.-granting program, the Frederick S. Pardee RAND Graduate School. Graduates are awarded degrees in policy analysis, "a multidisciplinary, applied field that tries to use research to unlock difficult policy problems." See http://www.prgs.edu/curriculum, accessed on July 31, 2006.

affiliation can function as a substitute for an educational credential in newspaper and magazine articles:

> Obviously, credentials are important. But…there may be credentials that academics would see as significant, but in the way that these stories run, it's generally just, "So-and-so is a health care something at Heritage," or "So-and-so is a health care something at Brookings." And that's really the credential. So, basically, *the think tank brings its own credential*, even if the person has no serious credentials in the way that academics or other policy people would understand it.[30]

David Keene, chairman of the American Conservative Union, makes a similar point about the historical role of think tanks in the modern conservative movement:

> In part, [William F.] Buckley's point was that since we didn't control anything, we couldn't credential anybody. So then what happens in an administration is when you're looking for an assistant secretary general, you generally look to somebody who had been a deputy assistant in some previous thing. And if the other side is in power, you can't do it because you never had those people, so you have to find other ways of credentialing them. And think tanks did that.[31]

In the eyes of journalists and politicians, then, a think tank affiliation may serve as a kind of substitute for academic or political credentials.

(v) Emergence of a new lifestyle and habitus.[32] Finally, as the space of think tanks has become more bounded and distinct, a new mode of social and professional being, something approximating a "policy expert" lifestyle, has emerged. I discuss this tendency in greater detail in the paper's concluding section. My argument is that policy experts have come to share certain basic categories of perception, appreciation, and action, yet, paradoxically, the subjectivity of the policy expert is one predicated on a kind of *dispositional hybridity*.

Structural dependence

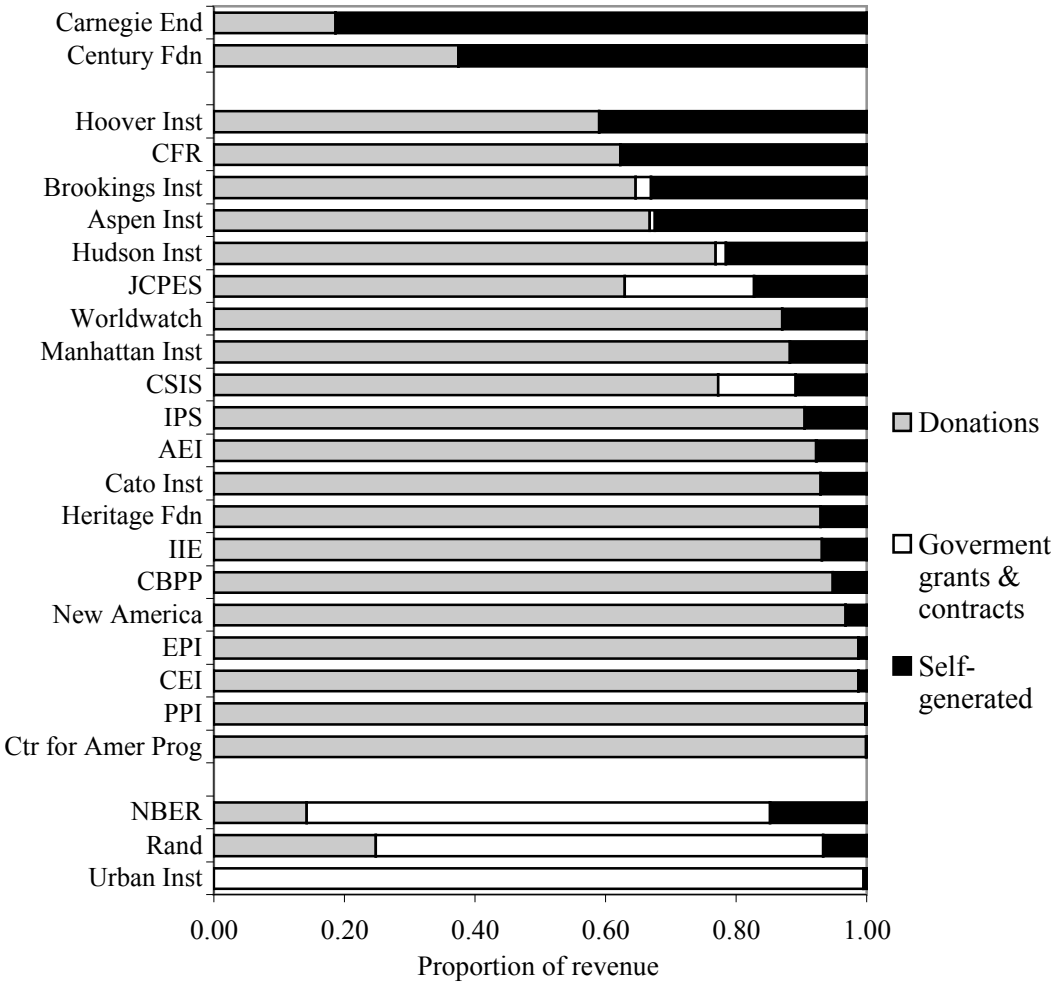
[30] Author interview, Joshua Micah Marshall, July 14, 2003.
[31] Author interview, David Keene, American Conservative Union, December 17, 2003.
[32] I take this tendency from Philip Gorski's (forthcoming) discussion of how fields emerge. On the notion of habitus see Bourdieu (1964; [1980] 1990; [1997] 2000) and Wacquant (2005).

Think tanks occupy an increasingly bounded social universe, but there are obdurate structural obstacles to their ever becoming a bona fide field. One of the most prominent characteristics of American think tanks is their structural dependence on the more established domains of politics, academics, business, and journalism. This section examines the material side of this dependence, which expresses itself in two key ways. First, few think tanks are financially autonomous; most depend on short-term donors for their funding, the largest share of which are politically active individuals and foundations. Business corporations and corporate foundations supply a smaller but still substantial portion of this funding. Second, a system of formal affiliations ensures the continued subordination of think tanks to outside groups. Many think tanks are spin-offs or ancillary partners of larger organizations, especially political entities such as state agencies, congressional coalitions, political parties, and activist organizations.

Figure 2 gives a broad overview of funding patterns for twenty-five major think tanks, selected for their primacy in terms of budget size, staff size, and public visibility. These data establish a rough differentiation among three kinds of organizations: (1) think tanks that depend mostly on donors; (2) those that rely primarily on government grants and contracts; and, (3) those whose income is largely self-generated through investments, conference and membership fees, and proceeds from the sale of publications. However, the distribution of organizations across the three categories is highly uneven: 20 of the 25 think tanks in the group fall into the first ("donor-dependent") category, within which there are gradations of autonomy. Of the remaining five organizations, three (Urban Institute, Rand Corporation, National Bureau of Economic Research) are primarily government-funded, while only two (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Century Foundation) generate the majority of their own revenue.[33]

[33] Among these sources, investment income usually represents the largest share of self-generated income for the major think tanks.

Figure 2: Revenue sources for twenty-five major think tanks, 2003



Source: Figures derived from 2003 IRS-990 tax forms. Self-generated revenue includes income from investments (securities, interest on savings, etc.), conference and membership fees, rental income, and proceeds from the sale of publications. In most cases, this figure is calculated by adding lines 2, 3, 4, 5, 6c, 7, 9c, 10c, and 11 of the organization's IRS-990 income tax return. Figures for the Hoover Institution were calculated from the organization's annual report, since Hoover does not file its own federal income tax return.

Figure 2 does not disaggregate the broad category of "donors." Obtaining systematic data of this kind is difficult because think tanks are not legally required to disclose a list of their contributors. Scholars must instead rely on two non-systematic kinds of data: voluntary disclosures by the think tanks and the self-reports of donors. Table 1 presents a breakdown of

contributions received by nine "donor-dependent" organizations.[34] These data represent about $149 million worth of contributions made during two years, 2002 and 2004. Of this total, the largest share of funding came from individuals, while the next greatest sum came from philanthropic foundations. Business corporations and labor unions gave smaller but still sizeable amounts. In sum, the major U.S. think tanks are supported by a broad mixture of donors, of which individual contributors, foundation grants, and corporate giving make up the largest share.[35]

Table 1: Contributions to nine major think tanks by donor category

	Year	Individuals		Foundations		Corporations		Labor unions		Total
		$ (mil.)	%	$	%	$	%	$	%	$
Heritage Fdn	2004	21.3	67.1	8.5	26.6	2.0	6.3	0	0	31.8
AEI	2004	9.3	38.2	9.1	37.3	6.0	24.4	0	0	24.4
CSIS	2004	1.6	10.1	7.5	46.8	6.9	43.0	0	0	16.0
Cato Inst	2004	11.0	80.4	1.8	13.0	0.9	6.5	0	0	13.7
EPI	2002	0.1	1.8	2.0	55.8	0.1	3.9	1.4	38.6	3.6
JCPES	2002	0.1	4.7	1.7	56.9	1.2	38.5	0	0	3.0
IPS	2004	0.5	21.4	1.8	78.6	0	0	0[1]	0	2.3
Total		**44.0**	**46.4**	**32.3**	**34.1**	**17.0**	**18.0**	**1.4**	**1.4**	**94.8**
		Contributions (undiff.)				Corporate membership fees				Total
		$		%		$		%		$
CFR	2004	10.3		70.0		4.4		30.0		14.8
Aspen Inst	2004	28.3		72.2		10.9		27.8		39.3
Total		**38.6**		**71.6**		**15.4**		**28.4**		**54.0**

[1]The Institute for Policy Studies acknowledges the support of two labor unions, AFL-CIO and AFSCME, in its 2004 annual report, but does not list labor unions as a donor category on the income statement contained in the same report.

Source: EPI and JCPES 2002 annual reports; AEI, Aspen, Cato, CFR, CSIS, Heritage, and IPS 2004 annual reports.

[34] The remaining eleven think tanks in the donor-dependent group either offer no categorical information on their contributors in their most recent annual reports, or simply did not publish an annual report. The Institute for International Economics, the Progressive Policy Institute, and the Center for American Progress fall into the latter group.

[35] These numbers yield a picture similar to a separate count of the contributors listed (without donation sums) in several think tank annual reports. Again, individual donors make up the largest share (45.6%) of contributors, with foundations (32.9%) and corporations (14.7%) next. There is nonetheless considerable organizational variation. For example, 30.9% of the major donors listed in the Hudson Institute's 2002 annual report were business corporations. The Brookings Institution is noteworthy for taking substantial contributions (10.5% of its 2003-4 donors) from foreign governments.

A closely related indicator of structural dependence is the system of formal affiliations linking many think tanks to more established organizations. Various larger entities have their adjuncts in this space, especially political bodies such as state agencies, congressional coalitions, political parties, and activist organizations. Thus, for example, the Rand Corporation and the Urban Institute, harnessed to specific federal agencies, have in effect been designated as official organs of intellectual production.[36] Other think tanks operate in a relationship of reciprocal exchange with parties and activist organizations, such as the Progressive Policy Institute, an arm of the Democratic Leadership Council, and the Worldwatch Institute. The latter think tank "works with a network of more than 150 partners in 40 countries …[to] maintain a pivotal role in the global environmental movement."[37] Table 2 lists some of the most prominent formal relationships between think tanks and outside organizations.

Table 2: Organizations and think tank affiliates

Organization type	Parent organization	Think tank
State agency	Department of Defense	Rand Corporation
	Depts. of HUD, HHS, Education	Urban Institute
Political party	Democratic Leadership Council	Progressive Policy Inst.
Congressional. coalition	Northeast Midwest coalition	Northeast-Midwest Inst.
	California cngrss. coalition	California Institute
Social movement	Environmental movement	Worldwatch Inst
		Resources for the Future
Political candidate	Newt Gingrich	Progress & Freedom Fdn.
University	Georgetown University	CSIS
	Stanford University	Hoover Institution

[36] Taking its name from the phrase "research and development," the Rand Corporation was originally established as a project of the Douglas Aircraft Company in 1945 and spun off as an independent entity in 1948. Since its inception, Rand has performed contract research for the U.S. Department of Defense, producing technical analyses related to military planning. Similarly, the Urban Institute has carried out extensive research on the implementation and evaluation of social policies, the largest share of which has been for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. HUD provided over 90% of the organization's initial funding in 1968 (McGann 1992:736), but the Department of Health and Human Services, and, increasingly, the Department of Education, are major patrons of the Institute as well.

[37] Worldwatch Institute, http://www.worldwatch.org/node/1004, accessed on July 31, 2006.

These are only the most unambiguous cases of "junior partnership." Most think tanks are attached less conspicuously to outside entities. The conservative Heritage Foundation, for example, has been called "the de facto research arm of the GOP" (Callahan 1999:2). Heritage was established in 1973 by two Republican legislative aides, Edwin Feulner, Jr. and Paul Weyrich, to provide an organized research operation to congressional allies.[38] Other think tanks are linked more closely with business corporations. Fred Smith, Jr., president of the Competitive Enterprise Institute, says pointedly, "I probably have as much business funding as any group out there…. We have to illustrate that business needs allies in the war for survival. We're sort of a 'battered business bureau.' Businessmen who get in real trouble may well then decide they need allies, and they'll reach out and say, 'Is there anyone out there we can help whose work parallels our interests?'"[39] Finally, some think tanks have tight but informal linkages with media organs. For example, in 2002 the New America Foundation forged an agreement with *The Atlantic* magazine to co-produce an annual "State of the Union" issue featuring essays by New America experts. The first version of this issue featured thirteen policy essays, twelve of which were written by New America staff members.

Structural hybridity: the characteristics of policy experts

Little is known about think tank-affiliated policy specialists themselves. Who are they? What are their typcial trajectories through social space? This section examines patterns of

[38] But Heritage has no formal affiliation with the Republican Party and also routinely partners with advocacy groups such as the American Conservative Union, the Club for Growth, and the Family Research Council. Heritage's success spawned imitators like Democratic counterpart the Center for American Progress. John Podesta, former chief of staff to President Bill Clinton, played the leading role in its founding in 2003.

[39] Author interview, Fred Smith, Jr., Competitive Enterprise Institute, December 16, 2003. Also see *New York Times*. 2003. "Exxon Backs Groups That Question Global Warming." May 28. C3, which reported that Exxon had increased, to more than $1 million annually, its "donations to Washington-based policy groups that, like Exxon itself, question the human role in global warming." The article identifies the Competitive Enterprise Institute as one of these recipients.

educational attainment and career background among policy experts at the major think tanks. These data will help us not only to identify the forms of capital that are present in the think tank universe, but also to make some preliminary conclusions about their relative values. Of particular importance here is the role of educational credentials. Credentials are the objectified form of cultural capital, the species of power locked in what Wacquant ([1989] 1996:ix) calls a "vexing yet obdurate relationship of collision and collusion, autonomy and complicity, distance and dependence" with economic capital. How much cultural capital is there in the space of think tanks? Is it evenly or unevenly distributed? And what is its value – which is to say, is its ownership positively related to success in the competition among organizations?

We would expect cultural capital to play a major role in commanding access to valued positions within any field of intellectual production. However, I find, first, that there is considerably less cultural capital in the think tank world than in the corresponding arena of academic production; second, that cultural capital is distributed in a highly uneven manner; and, third, there is little indication that the ownership of cultural capital is strongly linked to dominance or subordination in the competition among organizations. Table 3 gives an overview of the educational attainment of the expert staff members at twenty-one major think tanks.

Table 3: Highest educational degree attained by expert staff at twenty-one think tanks

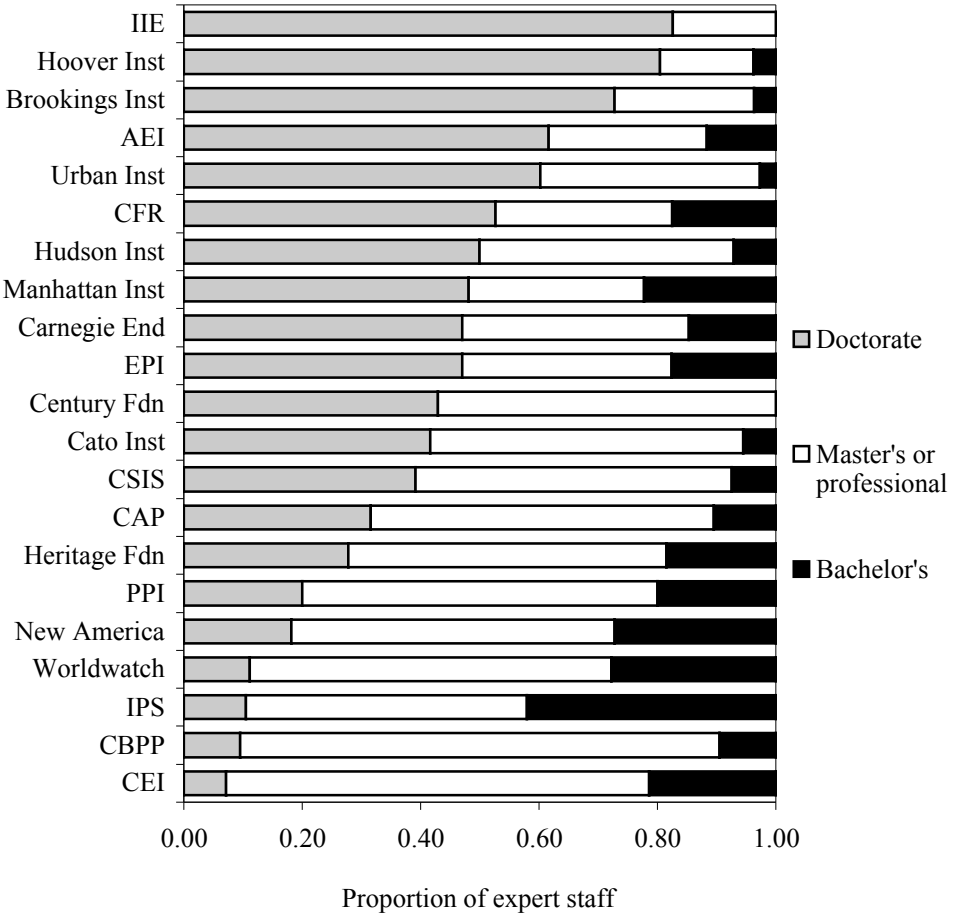
Degree	#	%
Doctorate	493	51.2
Master's	266	27.7
Professional	108	11.2
Bachelor's	95	9.9
(Missing data)	(49)	--
Total	1011	100

As we would expect, cultural capital has a substantial presence within this social space. All of the policy experts for whom data are available report at least a bachelor's-level education, and a large majority (90.1%) have attained a graduate degree of some kind. Yet the data also show that attaining a doctorate degree is far from compulsory. The population of policy experts at these think tanks is divided roughly in half between those who hold a doctorate degree (51.2%) and those who do not (48.8%). This rate of doctorate attainment is lower, for example, than in the corresponding arena of academic production.[40]

Are the highly educated spread evenly throughout the space of think tanks or are they concentrated in certain organizations? Figure 3 shows the relative proportions of doctorate, master's/professional, and bachelor's degree holders at each of the same twenty-one think tanks. The figure reveals considerable variation in educational attainment across the major organizations. Certain think tanks (e.g., IIE, Hoover Institution, Brookings Institution) are composed mostly of doctorate degree holders, while others (e.g., Institute for Policy Studies, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, and the Competitive Enterprise Institute) employ relatively few doctorate holders and even a substantial share of bachelor's degree holders. There is wide variation in the presence of cultural capital in American think tanks. Nor is the rate of doctorate attainment clearly related to success or failure. Certain long-enduring, highly visible, and well-funded think tanks – including the Cato Institute, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and the New America Foundation – are situated in the lower half of this list. Furthermore, the think tank most often judged to be the dominant national think tank in Washington, the Heritage Foundation, falls in the bottom third of this range.

[40] For example, the National Center for Educational Statistics (Cataldi et al. 2005:24) lists the rate of full-time instructional faculty with "doctoral or first-professional" degrees in the social sciences (93.5%), natural sciences (89.8%), and humanities (83.4%). See Table 14, Percentage distribution of full-time instructional faculty and staff, by highest credential attained, institution type, and program area: Fall 2003.

Figure 3: Educational attainment of expert staff at major think tanks

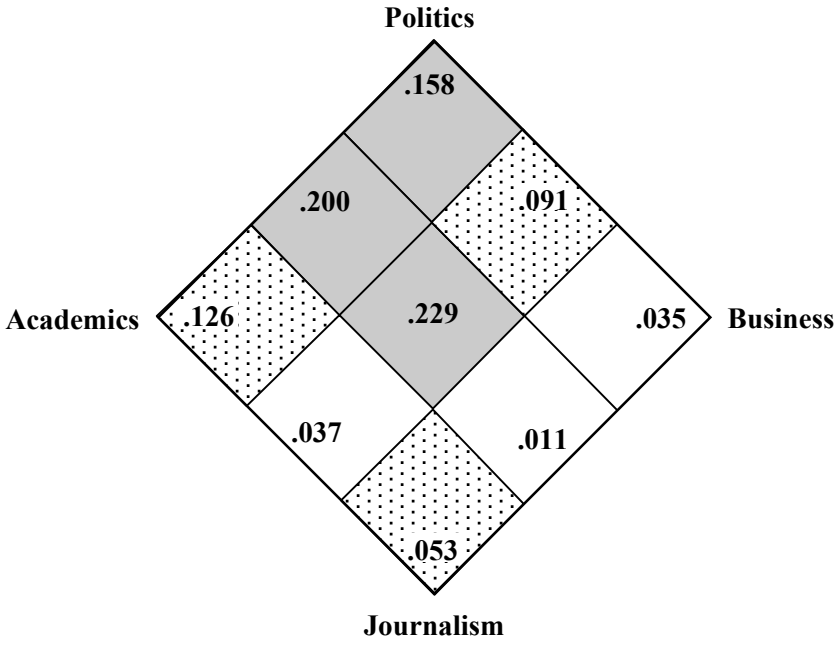


Career backgrounds of policy experts

What is the typical career path into the think tank world? Figure 4 reports on the career backgrounds of the expert staff members (n=876) at the same twenty-one think tanks. To construct this figure, I coded the career backgrounds of the policy experts according to nine structural origins, plus one additional "other" category. The categories are "academic," "academic/state," "state," "state/profit sector," "profit sector," "profit sector/journalism," "journalism," "journalism/academic," "hybrid," and "other." "Hybrid," situated in the center of the figure, refers to occupational backgrounds that combine experience in three or all four of

these sectors (16.7%), or backgrounds that combine two structurally opposing locations – academic/profit (2.9%) or journalism/state (3.3%).[41] Placing the data in our analytical space shows the think tank proto-field to be unevenly populated, with the largest share of policy experts reporting mixed backgrounds. Most strikingly, 22.9% of the experts list what I call "hybrid" career trajectories. Experts with job credentials in both the state and academic sectors (20.0%) and the state-sector only (15.8%) are the next most common types, followed by academic-only (12.6%) and "state-profit" (9.1%) backgrounds. About 5.3% of the think tank experts report career backgrounds in journalism only.

Figure 4: Distribution of policy experts in the think tank field by career background (n=876)



In general, then, occupational hybridity is common among policy experts. About 56.8%

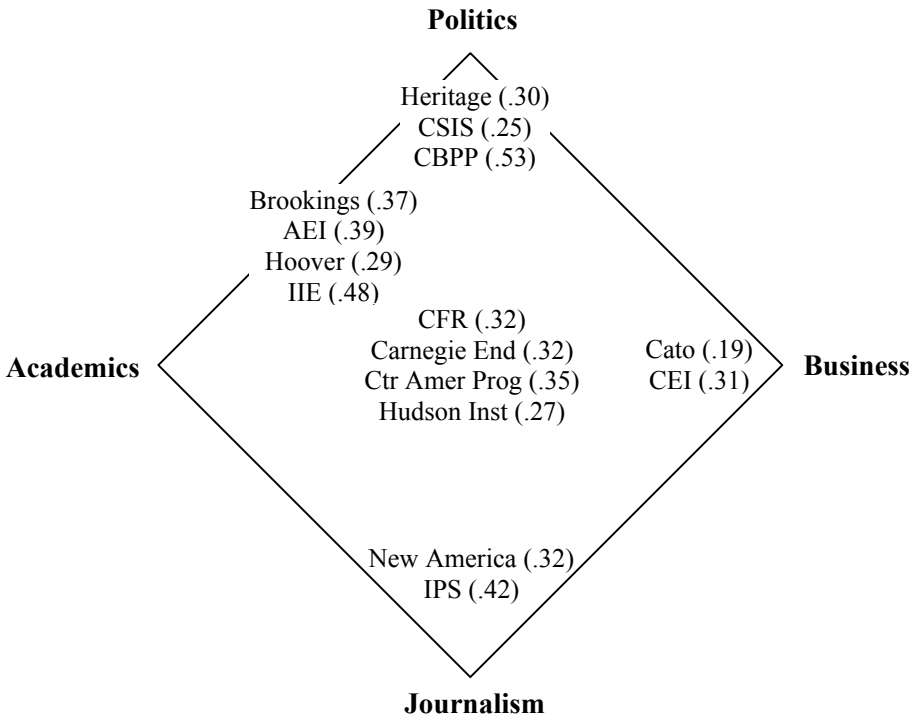
[41] "Other" (6.0%), which is not included in the figure, refers to individuals with career backgrounds exclusively in other sectors, which, in practice, usually meant in the fields of non-profit research and advocacy. A think tank expert who reported no prior job experience would fall into this category. The figures presented here refer to proportions of the total population of experts in the database.

report job credentials in two or more of the four sectors included here. (If we expand our notion of career hybridity to include those who have worked previously in one of these sectors *plus* in the non-profit sector, then the level of occupational hybridity increases to 71.6%.) The figure's shaded areas – the state-academic, state, and hybrid regions – represent the most densely populated region of this social space. Fully 58.7% of think tank experts inhabit one of these regions of the think tank field. By contrast, the three lightly shaded areas, representing the academic, state-profit, and journalism regions, make up its major "suburbs." These are somewhat densely populated sectors of the space of think tanks, but less so than the core sector. The remaining, non-shaded, region of the figure refers to the most thinly populated area of the think tank proto-field.

Figure 5 takes the think tank organization, not the individual expert, as the unit of analysis to make much the same point as the previous figure. This diagram reports the modal career background of expert staff members at several major think tanks and locates these organizations accordingly in our analytic space. I find patterned variation among the think tanks. At such venerable "wonk havens" as the Brookings Institution, the American Enterprise Institute, the Hoover Institution, and the Institute for International Economics, for example, a plurality of experts report "state-academic" career backgrounds. By contrast, at the more "political" think tanks, such as the Heritage Foundation, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the largest share of policy experts report "state-only" career backgrounds. Two think tanks are situated nearer the business pole of the space of think tanks by this measure: a plurality of experts at the Cato Institute and the Competitive Enterprise Institute report "for-profit only" career backgrounds. Similarly with respect to the journalism pole: the Institute for Policy Studies and the New America Foundation employ large numbers of

policy experts with backgrounds in newspaper and magazine reporting. And, finally, at several think tanks – the Council on Foreign Relations, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Center for American Progress, and the Hudson Institute – "hybrid" career backgrounds are the most common type. Significantly, at no think tank in the database does the largest share of experts report an exclusively academic career background. Even the think tanks with the most academic reputations, such as Brookings and Hoover, while employing ex-academics, tend to hire ex-academics who have also established a career in politics.

Figure 5: Selected think tanks in social space, by experts' modal career background



Summary

Think tanks in the United States are marked by a fundamental incongruity. On the one hand, they have managed collectively to wrest a degree of independence from other intellectual

producers, including universities, such that now they occupy a relatively bounded and distinct social space. Think tanks have their own history, forms of intellectual production, criteria of legitimation, practical conventions, and so on. On the other hand, think tanks are creatures of heteronomy, remaining financially and organizationally dependent on the anchoring institutions that brought them into being. They do not make up an autonomous space of intellectual production, but instead engage in policy research under conditions of limited autonomy. Think tank-affiliated policy experts are a heterogeneous group with divergent social origins and widely differing levels of cultural capital. This paper's next section seeks to uncover basic patterns in the mental categories of policy experts. I then inquire into the linkage between these two structural levels and discuss its broader significance.

FOUR IDIOMS OF DUTY AND DIFFERENCE: A CONSTRUCTIVIST ACCOUNT

I begin this constructivist account of American think tanks with a simple question: How do think tank-affiliated policy experts understand their own social role? Do they share a professional ethos, and, if so, what are its distinguishing characteristics? My argument is that, lacking an established definition of what it means to be a policy expert, think tank representatives improvise one using the ready-made made cultural materials supplied by the more established fields to which they are linked. They draw especially on four idioms to characterize their own social role – those of the academic scholar, the policymaker, the business entrepreneur, and the journalist. These tropes have a double valence, functioning both as anchoring metaphors and as bundles of literal claims about the proper style and manner of the policy expert. Never content to choose just one of these practical models, the professional ethos of the policy expert is predicated on the strenuous triple goal of mastering, juggling, and

reconciling them. A kind of dispositional hybridity is thus the defining mark of the policy expert's subjectivity. However, because the goal of mastering and juggling four divergent social roles is nearly impossible, there is considerable differentiation among policy experts with respect to the relative salience of these idioms.

The following section runs through these idioms and discusses how each one guides and conditions the self-understandings of policy experts. The analysis underscores the tight linkage between structure and identity in the space of think tanks.

"The Wonk": the policy expert as academic scholar

Think tank-affiliated experts commonly invoke the figure of the academic scholar in characterizing their own social role. Like their academic kin, policy experts aspire to produce cumulative knowledge based on rigorous empirical data for publication in books and articles. In this view, the individual expert should possess a set of exceptional personal characteristics to equip him[42] for such production, including a sharp analytical mind, social scientific training, and freedom from both ideological bias and political and economic constraint.[43] Prestigious educational credentials count favorably as well. The academic idiom commonly extends from the actor to the organization: if the policy expert is like a scholar, then the think tank is said to be like a university – a "university without students," in the often used expression of the Brookings

[42] I use the pronoun "him" not only for stylistic purposes but also to reflect the predominantly male make-up of the think tank world. There is reasonable evidence to support this claim. For example, in 2001, *Washington Post* columnists Richard Morin and Claudia Deane reported on the gender imbalance among policy experts at seven major think tanks (Urban, CSIS, Brookings, Heritage, Cato, AEI, and IPS). In combination, their count showed 279 men (67.9%) and 132 women (32.1%) working as expert staff members at these organizations. The only think tank in the group that had more female than male policy experts was the Institute for Policy Studies (11 to 6). The most "gender-unbalanced" think tank was the Cato Institute (35 men, 1 woman). *Washington Post*. 2001. "Media's New Sugar Daddies: Foundations." May 15. A15.

[43] Take, for example, Strobe Talbott, former president of the Brookings Institution, speaking to the *Washington Post*: "We make a real effort to keep our policy [analyses] objective in the sense that we let chips fall where they may as we identify the big questions and seek the big answers – rather than letting our product be skewed in any fashion by ideological or partisan preferences." *Washington Post* online chat, http://www.washingtonpost.com/, accessed on September 14, 2004.

Institution.[44]

Though hardly ubiquitous, the language of academic production is applied to, and adopted by, think tanks in a number of ways. Policy research organizations commonly refer to their expert staff members as "scholars" and "fellows" – irrespective of academic affiliation or background – and describe their intellectual production as "scholarship." Some think tanks have endowed staff positions reminiscent of university professorships. For example, the Heritage Foundation has the Chung Ju-Yung Fellow for Policy Studies, Brookings has the Bruce and Virginia MacLaury Chair in Economic Studies, and AEI has the Joseph J. and Violet Jacobs Scholar in Social Welfare Studies. Other think tanks implicitly compare themselves to universities. In 1997, for example, the Cato Institute launched a division called the "Cato University" that offered educational seminars for aspiring libertarians.[45] A few think tanks, including the Brookings Institution, have world wide web addresses with the suffix ".edu." As noted, the Rand Corporation has a degree-granting capacity. And, finally, in a typical popular account, the *New York Times* characterized the Heritage Foundation in 2003 as "like a university unto itself." The academic world thus provides a source domain from which think tank intellectuals metaphorically characterize their own social role.[46]

The semantic linkage between think tanks and scholarly production becomes apparent in personal interviews with think tank representatives. The following interview excerpts illustrate the widespread use of this mental model:

> TM: What are the major considerations discussed in a board meeting?
> DB: Our board wants to know if we're publishing good quality scholarship and if it contributes to making America a better place.[47]

[44] See, for example, Weaver (1989) and *New York Times*. 1983. "Brookings Thinks about its Future." December 14. A30, in which Brookings Institution expert Herbert Kaufman says, "This is a university without students."
[45] See http://www.cato-university.org/. Accessed on June 15, 2006.
[46] "Source domain" is a linguistics term that refers to the conceptual basis of a metaphor. See, for example, Lakoff (1987).
[47] Author interview, David Boaz, Cato Institute, November 24, 2003.

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TM: What are the forms of expertise that you have to have?

CP: …You can't sell superficial ideas on any sustained basis, so you also have to be generating serious analysis…so that your work is credible and is recognized by academic leaders and policy leaders as something that they should pay attention to.[48]

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TM: What are the marks of a good research product in the context of the policymaking process?

JW: Well, good research is good research, whether it's policy-oriented or not. It's transparent. It's replicable.

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GA: Brookings has a very— it's like a university. The range of views there, the range of opinions. The one thing that is consistent is that the people they have there are of the highest caliber. They have all the badges they need to accumulate to be viewed as an expert.[49]

The fact that think tank intellectuals and their audiences adopt an idiom of academic production is not surprising, since the earliest think tanks were founded with the purpose of spanning the divide between universities and politics. The mission statement of the Brookings Institution, for example, once read, "In its conferences, publications, and other activities, Brookings serves as a bridge between scholarship and policymaking, bringing new knowledge to the attention of decisionmakers and affording scholars greater insight into public policy issues." The historical roots of the academic idiom thus run deep, even if think tank intellectuals sometimes qualify it by referring to other idioms to characterize their professional role.

"The Hack": the policy expert as policymaker

A second language of professional duty imagines the policy expert not as a scholar, but rather as a policymaker whose first obligation is to be familiar with the distinctive rules of order, temporal rhythms, procedural details, and norms of reciprocity guiding national politics in the U.S. In this view, the essential characteristics of the think tank-affiliated expert are the ability to anticipate "hot" policy issues before they arise and the capacity to churn out useful reports

[48] Author interview, Clyde Prestowitz, Economic Strategy Institute, July 28, 2003.
[49] Author interview, Greg Anrig, Century Foundation, November 22, 2003.

quickly to coincide with these developments. Like a congressional aide, the policy expert should possess detailed knowledge of the workings of legislative and executive agencies and a familiarity with the language of political debate. In this trope, prior political experience is an asset, and the measure of a good policy report is less its scholarly rigor than its functionality in the policymaking process.[50] Being "too scholarly" is, in fact, a fatal flaw.[51]

According to Richard Munson, executive director of the Northeast-Midwest Institute, "You have to…know how to move [an idea] through the policy labyrinth that is this legislative body and administrative body":

> TM: And what are the considerations that are taken into account?
> RM: Well, it's various things. Who sits on what [congressional] committee? Who has seniority? Who sets the policy agenda for that committee? What other stakeholders can be aligned with the proposal that you have that would make it more acceptable to the powers that be on the relevant committees that have to deal with this?
> TM: Coalition-building?
> RM: Yeah, coalition building. Vote-counting, in a way. At the end of the day, on a particular subcommittee, are you going to get out of there with a favorable vote or not? You'll not always, but often, have to think, "Will it sell on the Hill?"[52]

Similarly, Clyde Prestowitz explains, "You have to be in tune to developments and take advantage of opportunities to use those developments and respond to them by writing articles, getting that in the press, getting testimony up on the Hill. …You have to understand the issues and the players in the policy areas that you're dealing with."[53]

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[50] Consider, for example, the following interview quotation from Bruce Stokes: "Having former government service helps a lot. I think there's a certain aura that comes with, 'He is the former ambassador to the Soviet Union,' or, 'He is the former Undersecretary of State.' You know, the fact that it was twenty years ago and you're kind of pontificating on a subject that you did absolutely nothing on at that point in your life, that doesn't matter. It's just, 'The former this.' You know, people need a title, and that helps." Author interview, Bruce Stokes, *National Journal* and Council on Foreign Relations, June 30, 2003.

[51] For example, reflecting on the American Enterprise Institution's declining status in the think tank world in the 1980s, Lee Edwards said, "They [had] become more interested in debating the issues, not [in] having a point of view. They had also gotten into the habit of doing big long studies, fat studies and volumes, and so forth. Being a little too, in their writing, perhaps a little too scientific." Author interview, Lee Edwards, Heritage Foundation, July 8, 2003.

[52] Author interview, Richard Munson, Northeast-Midwest Institute, July 10, 2003.

[53] Author interview, Clyde Prestowitz, Economic Strategy Institute, July 28, 2003.

In this model, the think tank expert succeeds if and to the degree that he or she becomes an effective player in the policymaking process. Providing legislative testimony, briefing members of Congress, and writing "talking points" memoranda are all desirable activities. Cultivating access to influential networks and staying on top of political developments are among the policy expert's most important tasks. According to Alice Rivlin, the Brookings Institution "tries to keep current – I mean, to be working on things that are relevant and also fundable…. The funders want you to be working on things that are hot issues at the moment. And they also want you to shift around."[54]

Importantly, the policymaker trope is often invoked to distinguish think tanks from universities. For example, Strobe Talbott, former president of the Brookings Institution, points out, "One difference between a think tank and a university is that we do not go in much for 'pure' research – which is to say, we emphasize research that is relevant and useful to policymakers."[55] A central point of departure from scholarly work lies in the distinctive *temporality* of politics, to which think tanks must subordinate their production. For example, to the question, "What are the marks of a good researcher here?", Tim Ransdell, director of the California Institute, replies, "Timeliness. It's not just seeing something, but it's also getting it out fast. I think the value here is being able to rip things out in a hurry. The staff here is really good at that."[56] William Galston, a veteran of several think tanks, likewise observes, "The policy process occurs in real time, and so coming out with a really useful study two years after the reauthorization of the bill is of no earthly use to anyone who is engaged in the real policy process. So one thing think tanks are aware of is the policy schedule."[57]

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[54] Author interview, Alice Rivlin, Brookings Institution, February 11, 2004.
[55] *Washington Post* online chat, http://www.washingtonpost.com/, accessed on September 14, 2004.
[56] Author interview, Tim Ransdell, California Institute, July 21, 2003.
[57] Author interview, William Galston, University of Maryland, June 3, 2004.

"The Policy Entrepreneur": the policy expert as salesman

A third idiom of professional duty imagines the think tank expert not as a scholar or a policymaker, but rather as an entrepreneur in a "marketplace of ideas." Think tank experts routinely invoke the related concepts of salesmanship and commercial transaction to characterize both their setting and the attributes needed to excel in it. In this metaphor, the policy expert's goal is to market his or her intellectual wares to three kinds of consumers: legislators, who "buy" ideas by incorporating them into policy; donors, whose purchase is somewhat more literal because it involves giving money to the think tank; and journalists, who figuratively buy think tank studies by citing them and quoting their authors. In this trope, policy experts should possess the attributes of a successful promoter – good "people skills," a taste for marketing, and a knack for re-packaging ideas. The idiom commonly extends from the actor to the organization: like corporations vying for market share, think tanks are said to compete with one another in a crowded arena.

Clyde Prestowitz, founder and president of the Economic Strategy Institute, describes the successful policy expert in the following terms:

> You gotta be a salesman. You have to present your ideas crisply, convincingly, interestingly, and you have to have enormous energy. You have to have what the salesmen call "closing ability." Not only do you make the presentation, but you have to ask for the order. And the order may be a donation or the order may be a bill or a policy idea that you're trying to sell. But you have to be able to ask for the order and get it.[58]

The policy expert, in the words of another respondent, should be "innovative" and always able "to come up with sort of a new twist or a new angle on an idea."[59] Again, the key is not simply that the characteristics of an entrepreneur are useful in the think tank arena, but also that being

[58] Author interview, Clyde Prestowitz, Economic Strategy Institute, July 28, 2003.
[59] Author interview, Richard Munson, July 10, 2003.

"too much" of a scholar is a fatal flaw. Bruce Stokes, a veteran of several think tanks, explains,

> There are people who are wonderful thinkers, wonderful writers, but they feel very uncomfortable promoting themselves. And what you need is self-promoters. I think that some of the best people in this game have been shameless self-promoters…. They've got to want to sell their idea. They've got to be willing to make the phone calls to the press, push to get on the TV show, stay up nights writing the extra op-ed piece. People who are neurotic that way often are the best people. People who say, "Well, I've said all I have to say on that idea. It's here. Now I want to go and do something else," they don't tend to be as successful.[60]

In short, having both the desire and the capacity for self-promotion is a virtue in the think tank world.

The entrepreneurship idiom is not new. Crystallized in the commonly used term "policy entrepreneur," it dates at least to the early 1980s.[61] A notable use of this expression came in a 1987 *New York Times* magazine profile of think tank expert Pat Choate called "The Idea Merchant":

> Choate is known in Washington as a "policy entrepreneur," part of a small community of academics and writers whose articles and speeches and fat Rolodex files help to set the national political agenda. Says William A. Galston of the Roosevelt Center for American Policy Studies, a liberal think tank: "A policy entrepreneur is analogous to the entrepreneur in the private sector. He is the person who creates the venture, who invents the concept of the product and then goes out and markets it." The difference, Galston adds, is that "Pat Choate's working with political capital, not cash."[62]

Today this idiom has great resonance among policy experts. Reflecting on the secrets of the successful think tank, Edwin Feulner, founder and president of the Heritage Foundation, told the *Washington Post*, "The key ingredient is the person who heads it…must be entrepreneurial enough to see the unique need, salesman enough to convince others (donors, professors to write

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[60] Author interview, Bruce Stokes, *National Journal* and Council on Foreign Relations, June 30, 2003. For the opposite sentiment, consider the following remark made by Princeton professor and Ethics and Public Policy Center fellow Bernard Lewis and reported by the *Washington Post*: "I have been asked to talk about my book, a subject about which I have become somewhat weary. I shall endeavor not to communicate my boredom to the audience." *Washington Post*. 2002. "Out of Silicon Valley, and Looking Homeward." May 14. A19.

[61] The earliest use of this term in a major newspaper appears to have been in a 1983 profile of Douglas Bennet, president of the Roosevelt Center for American Policy Studies. *The Washington Post*. 1983. "Outsider at the Center: The Contrary Ways Of Richard Dennis." June 29. B1.

[62] *New York Times Magazine*. 1987. "The Idea Merchant." May 3: 36.

the papers, and policy makers and journalists) to listen to him and his people." Twenty years earlier, Feulner used the same imagery in a speech:

> It takes an institution to help propagandize an idea – to market an idea… organizations like the Institute of Economic Affairs or the Adam Smith Institute in London, my own Heritage Foundation in the U.S…. Proctor and Gamble does not sell Crest toothpaste by taking out one newspaper ad or running one television commercial. They sell and re-sell it every day, by keeping the product fresh in the consumer's mind. The institutes I have mentioned sell ideas in much the same manner.[63]

Nor is the use of an entrepreneurship idiom limited to conservative think tank representatives. Left-wing journalist and Center for American Progress fellow Eric Alterman uses the same trope in an interview:

> TM: Can you tell me something about the set of skills that you need in order to be a successful think tanker, for lack of a better term?
> EA: Well, there is sort of a public policy entrepreneur personality…which basically involves being a good schmoozer. That's really all there is to it.
> TM: Schmoozer with journalists? With political figures?
> EA: With whomever. I mean, a lot of academics are very inarticulate, more so in the hard sciences than in the short [*sic*] sciences. You know, they write essays and they're shy and stuff. [In] think tanks, you're better off being somewhat gregarious and not being that shy about selling yourself.[64]

Previous scholarship on think tanks has tended toward uncritical adoption of this metaphor rather than recognizing its status as a *folk category* that mirrors an underlying structural reality. For example, Weaver (1989:563) writes that think tank "managers must be concerned with finding a viable niche in a crowded, fragmented market" (p.563). McGann (1992:738) similarly argues that increased competition among think tanks has prompted them to develop "innovative technologies and products in order to seize a share of the market." Likewise, Smith (1991:215)

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[63] Cite. Reflecting on the meteoric rise of his organization, Feulner also told the *Washington Post* in 19xx, "If an entrepreneur markets what people want, he will be successful. That's what it's all about."

[64] Fred Smith, Jr., president of the Competitive Enterprise Institute offers an interesting variant on the salesmanship idiom, one that similarly emphasizes the need for aggressive self-promotion: **"**I use the analogy – I've used it for years – public policy is…like having a vaudeville act or something. You go up on the stage and you're juggling and you're singing, and you're balancing. And then you run behind the curtain and run up in the audience and applaud madly. And then you run back up on the stage and you juggle. And then you run back and applaud madly. If you do it right, all of a sudden other people start applauding and you've got a hit." Author interview, Fred Smith, Jr., founder and president, Competitive Enterprise Institute, December 16, 2003.

contends that "specialization – or finding an exclusive market niche – was the one common trait of successful entrants into the ideas industry."

"The Correspondent": the policy expert as journalist

If think tank experts sometimes talk of selling their wares to journalists, then at other times their figurative goal is simply to *become* a journalist. Newer and less salient than the previous idioms, this fourth trope prescribes that policy specialists produce and disseminate knowledge in a format that is both accessible and compelling to political actors and the wider public. In this view, the most coveted abilities are a knack for writing in plain language and a willingness to compose short, compact studies in a form similar to newspaper articles. "You have to be in tune to developments and respond to them by writing articles, getting that in the press," says Clyde Prestowitz, "So it's very, you know, public relations, media relations – or media savvy – is a very important aspect of the business."[65] Like the policymaking and entrepreneurship models, the journalism trope is often invoked to distinguish the production of think tank expertise from academic production.[66]

Policy experts should "have a sense of what's going to be newsworthy," in the words of one think tank veteran.[67] They should, according to Richard Munson, be "able to consolidate their technical, complex ideas into something that is really very understandable, that is, a sound bite, if you will." Says Eric Alterman: "It's true in journalism and it's true in think tanks: to be a

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[65] Author interview, Clyde Prestowitz, Economic Strategy Institute, July 28, 2003.

[66] Typically, the figurative journalist that policy experts refer to is a newspaper or magazine reporter. Sometimes, however, he or she is a broadcast reporter, in which case the most prized assets are comfort and eloquence on television:

> With doing broadcast interviews – well, specifically TV – your body language is so important. As important, if not more important, than actually the words that you use. Fred [Smith, Jr.] is very good at it. He's got the energy and the quips, and the producers love him, so he's on TV a lot. And of course he does radio well, too. But his energy— he really does TV. That's his forte.

Author interview, Jody Clarke, Competitive Enterprise Institute, December 16, 2003.

[67] Author interview, Bruce Stokes, *National Journal* and Council on Foreign Relations, June 30, 2003.

successful think tank person, you need to be able to write in a way that is understandable to non-specialists…. It's a matter of making complicated matters understandable in colloquial terms."[68] Asked to characterize a good intellectual product, Mark Agrast of the Center for American Progress says,

> First of all, it has to be intelligible. It has to be brief, and digestible. We don't tend to generate large major reports…. By and large what we produce is less than ten pages and our talking points are one page. And our columns are 750 words. They're op-ed length because we want people to actually be able to read them and digest them and apply them. So I think the most important characteristic of the work we're trying to put out is that it be accessible and respectful of people's information overload, and their limited time.[69]

Policy experts often consider brevity and accessibility as essential to an effective product.

Many think tank representatives have backgrounds in journalism. But even policy specialists without direct experience in journalist tend to have fine-grained categories for evaluating the news media universe. For example, when asked to name the most desirable news media outlets in which to be quoted, cited, or to publish their work, think tank representatives tend to have elaborate and very specific opinions. Few are ever at a loss for words. The following interview excerpts illustrate this degree of familiarity:

> [In the] print media, the place to be is the *New York Times*. The *Wall Street Journal*, if you're an economist. *The Washington Post* for local Washington exposure, including the Congress and the government, but the *Washington Post* doesn't have the national reach that the *Times* and the *Journal* do.
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> The *Wall Street Journal* or the *Financial Times*. On trade or budget [issues], those are the papers that you want to reach for. *The New Republic* or the *Weekly Standard* are more niche-oriented weeklies, one being more liberal, one being more conservative. But we have friends in both.
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> If you want to get your article talked about, it had better be in the *Post*, the *Times*, or the *Journal*. In magazines, *The New Republic*, the *Atlantic Monthly*. I think to a lesser extent *The Weekly Standard* and *National Review*. …*Harpers*, I think, has become kind of ridiculous. And the *Atlantic Monthly*…has just soared beyond *Harpers*.
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> There are three class-A newspapers, in terms of the reporters and the stories they write, and really two as far as op-eds are concerned for people from [Brookings]. You gotta be

[68] Author interview, Eric Alterman, Center for American Progress, November 21, 2003.
[69] Author interview, Mark Agrast, Center for American Progress, July 27, 2004.

> pretty conservative, by and large, to break through in the *Wall Street Journal* op-ed page…. So the two outlets are the [*New York*] *Times* and the [*Washington*] *Post*. Those are the class-A. *L.A. Times*, the [*Chicago*] *Tribune*, the *Boston Globe* are class-two, but they're not the same…. The *Post* and the *Times* are the ones. And it's not so much for numbers, it's for audience.
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> B: Andy Kohut, who's my boss at Pew, places incredibly great store in the [PBS *Jim*] *Lehrer Show*. It's true, they'll give you five to seven minutes or whatever as opposed to forty-five seconds. It's true that thoughtful people watch it….
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> T: You're on [NPR's] *Marketplace*.
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> B: Yeah, I'm on *Marketplace*. But that's not nearly as good as being on *All Things Considered*. You know, just a bigger audience and you get more time and, again, a thoughtful audience. [It's] useful in part because I'm amazed at the number of people who listen to NPR commuting. You know, serious people.

As think tanks have become more aggressively focused on achieving visibility through the news media, acquiring the modes of classification and evaluation of the journalist has become a prized capacity.

On the thorny synthesis of contradictory roles

Disentangling the idioms on which policy experts draw to fashion their unique self-understandings is a somewhat elusive analytical act. In fact, the most distinctive feature of the think tank-affiliated expert's professional ethos is its *hybridity*, or its strong emphasis on the goals of balancing and reconciling these divergent functions. Policy specialists seek, in short, to cultivate a mixed disposition by incorporating a set of contradictory habits, skills, and sensibilities. But this goal is doubly difficult – first, because each role requires a great deal of social learning, and, second, because the sensibilities they imply tend to be at loggerheads.

Fred Smith, Jr., president of the Competitive Enterprise Institute, explains, "At CEI, we really want you to try and always have one foot in the analytic camp and one foot in the advocacy camp."[70] Henry Aaron characterizes the Brookings Institution – a very different think

[70] Author interview, Fred Smith, Jr., Competitive Enterprise Institute, December 16, 2003.

tank – in strikingly similar terms: "We're Janus-faced, looking in both directions."[71] Alice Rivlin of Brookings makes a similar point:

> TM: If you're hiring a new scholar here at Brookings, what are the marks of a good policy researcher? Who are you looking for?
> AR: Good track record in writing stuff, usually.
> TM: Writing, like, op-ed pieces, or writing in academic journals?
> AR: Writing both. Brookings would look for somebody who had written a really good book on something or a series of not-too-academic journal articles. But if there had been some op-eds and things, that would be a plus. If this was a person who was a good speaker and presenter, that would be a plus.[72]

In each case, policy experts emphasize the need to develop disparate skills and sensibilities. As a corollary to this point, any actor who ventures "too close" to any one of the field's anchoring poles risks being "drawn off the edge" by its quasi-magnetic pull.

Among the cultural 'raw materials' from which policy specialists draw in the process of self-definition, the academic idiom undoubtedly holds pride of place as the symbolic point of departure. Simultaneously aping and negative, the relation of policy experts to the academic world is one of profound ambivalence. Admiration and mockery color their discussion of scholars. This tension finds expression within the think tank world in the opposition between "hacks" and "wonks." Journalist Bruce Reed has written about this primary axis of differentiation and force in the think tank proto-field:

> Strip away the job titles and party labels, and you will find two kinds of people in Washington: political hacks and policy wonks. Hacks come to Washington because anywhere else they'd be bored to death. Wonks come here because nowhere else could we bore so many to death. These divisions extend far beyond the hack havens of political campaigns and consulting firms and the wonk ghettos of think tanks on Dupont Circle. Some journalists are wonks, but most are hacks. Some columnists are hacks, but most are wonks. All members of Congress pass themselves off as wonks, but many got elected as hacks. Lobbyists are hacks who make money pretending to be wonks. *The Washington Monthly, The New Republic*, and the entire political blogosphere consist largely of wonks pretending to be hacks. "The Hotline" is for hacks; *National Journal* is for wonks. "The West Wing" is for wonks; "K Street" was for hacks. After two decades in Washington as a wonk working among hacks, I have come to the conclusion that the gap between

[71] Author interview, Henry Aaron, Brookings Institution, November 19, 2003.
[72] Author interview, Alice Rivlin, Brookings Institution, February 11, 2004.

Republicans and Democrats is as nothing compared to the one between these two tribes.[73]

Whereas "wonks" are structurally proximate to the academic world, "hacks" are distant from it. Projected into the think tank world, this opposition supplies the central organizing principle of competition and struggle, one that mirrors the field's always-incomplete effort to break off from academia and declare its independence.

CONCLUSION

This paper sets out from a basic recognition that think tanks are involved in a two-tiered competition – first, over the means of producing politically relevant knowledge, and, second, more broadly, over the *very definition of the intellectual*. Definitional quandaries have hampered the study of intellectuals from its inception. On the one hand, there is widespread agreement that what distinguishes an intellectual, at least in principle, is a certain vocational calling or ethos of autonomy from practical constraint. The point underpins Julien Benda's ([1927] 1969:40) foundational notion of intellectuals as "all those whose activity essentially is not in the pursuit of practical aims, all those who seek their joy in the practice of an art or a science or metaphysical speculation, in short in the possession of non-material advantages." Lewis Coser's (1965) classic study similarly focuses on those who pursue intellectual activity as an "end in itself."[74] In this view, intellectuals are thinkers who are free to draw their own conclusions, a property that

[73] Bruce Reed. 2004. "Bush's War Against Wonks." *Washington Monthly*. March. The *Washington Monthly, New Republic*, and *National Journal* are all political magazines; "The Hotline" is the *National Journal*'s "blogometer," a daily compendium of political web blogs (see http://blogometer.nationaljournal.com/, accessed on July 31, 2006); "The West Wing" is a television series that aired on NBC from 1999 to 2006; "K Street" was a short-lived HBO television series that aired in 2003.

[74] Coser (1965:xiii) writes, "If the mind is chained to the immediate demands of the practicalities of the hour, it loses that autonomy without which it becomes a simple machine for 'doing things.'" Elsewhere (p. 185), he adds, "When intellect is harnessed to the pursuit of power, it loses its essential character and necessarily become ancillary."

not only defines them for the purposes of study but also holds the key to their unique form of authority.[75]

Other scholars, however, have been more reluctant to decide who properly embodies the "intellectual ethos" and who does not. For analytical purposes, they have chosen to include in the category all social actors whose activity is marked by the performance of intellectual functions, whether or not these are carried out in a manner consistent with some ethos of autonomy. Thus, a common definition, used by Seymour Martin Lipset (1959) and others, holds that the category of intellectuals includes anyone who "produces, disseminates, or applies" knowledge or culture. This definition, formulated broadly to include social actors as various as academics, labor leaders, artists, and members of the clergy, has the advantage of remaining neutral on the contentious question of who has and does not have the "intellectual ethos." But lost here is any notion of a distinctive character, ethic, or commitment setting certain intellectual actors apart from others. We have, then, a split between more and less restrictive definitions – what Karabel (1996) calls the "realist" and "moralist" traditions – each of which carries a certain theoretical advantage.

The notion of field circumvents these definitional quandaries by shifting the unit of analysis from the actor to the *system of relations* in which he or she is embedded. In contrast to the actor-centered definitions, the field approach does not try to decide "on paper" who counts as an intellectual. Like the realist notion, the field approach includes under its purview anyone who produces effects within a socially defined space of competition over intellectual authority. But like the moralist conception, the field-centered approach gives *substantive* content to the notion

[75] Similarly, for Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:56), "the genuine intellectual is defined by her or his independence from temporal powers, from the interference of economic and political authority." Randall Collins (1998:19) lists the mark of the intellectual as his or her "detachment from ordinary concerns." And Flacks (1991:10) registers the concern: "The organizationally linked intellectual is to at least some extent required to sacrifice the very freedom he or she most needs to fulfill the vocation of the intellectual."

of "intellectual production" by noting its inverse relationship to economic production. Crucially, it also underscores the potential for symbolic struggle over what it means to be an intellectual, via the imagery of a contest over the field's boundaries.[76] Central to this approach is the built-in provision that an intellectual field is internally differentiated between an *autonomous* pole occupied by actors who subscribe to a distinctive ethos, and a *heteronomous* pole inhabited by actors who perform intellectual functions for alternative ends, including in the service of political and economic power.

This paper thus defines intellectuals, following Bourdieu, by their membership in the various fields of cultural production, the ensemble of related arenas organized around competitive struggles over symbolic forms of capital, or according to a logic opposite that of a strictly economic principle – even while recognizing that the products, practices, and perceptions of some actors within this field are strongly conditioned by their proximity to other fields. Such a definition recognizes that the label "intellectual" is not a neutral designation, and that the peculiar authority of intellectuals rests in no small part on their capacity to be recognized as such. It also underscores the relations among intellectuals by recognizing their different interests, goals, and notions of "expertise" and "credibility."

The study of think tanks, I argue, destabilizes the category "intellectuals" and thereby challenges the common notion that they are a negligible presence in U.S. politics. There is a variant of intellectuals that is quite influential in American public debate. In order to understand who they are, we have to understand the formation and development of the social space they

[76] In this vein, Bourdieu ([1986] 1990:143) warns, "We must be wary of the positivist vision which, for the needs of statistics, for example, determines limits by a so-called operational decision which arbitrarily settles in the name of science a question which is not settled in reality, that of knowing who is an intellectual and who isn't, who are the 'real' intellectuals, those who really realize the essence of the intellectual. In fact, one of the major issues at stake in the struggles that occur in the literary or artistic field is the definition of the limits of the field, that is, of legitimate participation in the struggles." See also Calhoun (1991:113), who calls the category "intellectual" an "ideological construction."

occupy. My central proposition is that as think tank-affiliated actor take positions on matters of public policy, they also reinforce, in an ongoing manner, their own structural location in a space of discourse that stands as a competitor to more independent intellectuals.

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