ELITE POLICY-PLANNING NETWORKS IN THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a network analysis of the governing boards of 12 leading policy-planning groups between 1973 and 1990. We found a high degree of overlapping leadership among these nominally independent organizations. The "inner circle" of the policy-planning elite (those who sit on the governing boards of two or more policy-planning groups) is comprised mostly of top executives of the largest industrial and financial firms. We also found a sharp increase in the cohesion of the policy-planning network in the late 1970s and an increase in the network centrality of several ultraconservative policy-planning groups. This change in the structure of the policy-planning network is an important factor in explaining the conservative shift in U.S. state policy during this period.

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INTRODUCTION

A distinctive feature of the American political system is the important role played by private policy-planning groups in the formulation of state policy. Such organizations as the Council on Foreign Relations, the Brookings Institution, and the Committee for Economic Development have historically exercised significant influence over the direction of government policy (Eakins 1966; Weinstein 1968; Domhoff 1970). These policy-planning groups bring together influential figures from business, government, academia, the legal profession, and the mass media to discuss general problems facing the nation and to seek consensus on policies to address those problems. Some policy-planning groups sponsor research on political and economic issues. Others are active in efforts to shape public opinion and in lobbying for the enactment of specific governmental policies. In a more informal way, these policy-planing groups also provide a training ground for new leadership and a channel for recruitment into government service.

One of the key issues of debate concerning these policy-planning groups has been the degree of cohesion among them and the concentration or dispersal of power that is implied by their influence over the planning process. Class-cohesion and elite theorists have documented the preponderance of business executives within these policy-planning organizations and the high degree of overlap among their members. From this, they conclude that policy planning in the United States is coordinated by an interconnected network within which big business exercises a dominant influence (Domhoff 1975; Dye 1978; Burch 1983; Useem 1984). Pluralist theorists view the presence of business leaders within policy-planning organizations as mainly symbolic and question the cohesiveness of business elites with respect to state policy (Berg and Zald 1978; Silk and Silk 1980).

A second issue that has received attention in recent years has been the conservative shift in U.S. state policy since the mid-1970s and the role of leading policy-planning groups in this process. One of the key developments facilitating this shift, according to many observers, has been the ascendance of a rightwing "counter-establishment" within the policy-planning elite (Blumenthal 1986; Peschek 1987; Jenkins and Eckert 1989; Himmelstein 1990). There has been little systematic research, however, on the structure of this conservative component of the policy-planning network or its relationship to the more established policy-planning institutions.

This paper seeks to further our understanding of these issues by presenting a network analysis of the leadership of 12 major policy-planning groups between 1973 and 1990. The results of our analysis are consistent with the claims of class-cohesion and elite theorists concerning the high degree of interlocking among policy-planning organizations; however, our more detailed analysis allows us to distinguish areas of greater or lesser cohesion within the

policy-planning network as well as significant changes in these patterns over time. Our study also confirms the pivotal role of business elites within the policy-planning network. If persons who occupy top positions in two or more major policy-planning groups are taken as the central figures within this network, then policy planning in the United States can only be described as overwhelmingly dominated by big business interests.

The most significant change during the period studied was a sharp increase in the density of interlocks within the policy-planning network in the late 1970s. It is noteworthy that these years, which have been described as a period of increasing conservative consensus among business leaders (Edsall 1984; Ferguson and Rogers 1986), were also marked by increasing cohesion within the policy-planning network. The greater density of interlocks during these years is partly attributable to the more integrative role played by several of the leading business lobbies. Cohesion was also enhanced by the establishment of closer ties between the formerly hegemonic (traditionally moderate) policy-planning groups and several ultraconservative groups that were previously on the periphery of the policy-planning network. These shifts in the structure of the policy-planning network during the late 1970s provide insight into the process by which elites (especially those from the business community) mobilized support for a conservative shift in state policy.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON THE POLICY-PLANNING NETWORK

The most systematic research on policy-planning groups has been conducted by scholars working within the class-cohesion and elite perspectives. The first detailed study of policy-planning groups was conducted by Domhoff (1975). Examining the membership lists of 13 elite social clubs and 17 policy-planning groups, he found numerous overlaps, which he analyzed using techniques of matrix algebra (see also Bonacich and Domhoff 1981). The central organization within this club-policy network was the corporate-dominated Business Council, and most large U.S. firms had interlocks with one or more groups in this network.

Domhoff's study remains the most rigorous investigation of its kind; however, his data from the late 1960s and early 1970s are now somewhat dated. From the perspective of the present, Domhoff's study is also limited by the fact that it omits several of the most influential policy-planning groups of the recent period (e.g., the American Enterprise Institute, the Business Roundtable, the Heritage Foundation, and the Trilateral Commission), some of which were not yet established at the time of his study. Critics might also object to the fact that Domhoff's method treats common membership in elite social clubs as equivalent to direct interlocks between policy-planning groups in analyzing

the structure of this network. For many pluralists, and even some elite theorists, admission to these exclusive clubs is merely a mark of prestige with little significance for elite cohesion (Dye 1986, p. 215). Moreover, critics might question the significance of findings based on the *general* membership of policy-planning groups. Membership alone, which may number in the hundreds, can be largely symbolic and may indicate nothing more than that an individual has made a financial contribution or lent the prestige of his or her name to the group in question.

A study by Dye (1978), although it was much less systematic in its method and more limited in its sample, came to conclusions that were similar to Domhoff's. Dye examined the top governing boards, rather than the general membership, of three of the most influential policy-planning groups: the Council on Foreign Relations, the Brookings Institution, and the Committee for Economic Development. He too found a preponderance of corporate executives and directors in these key leadership positions and numerous interlocks, both among these boards and between them and other civic, cultural, and educational institutions. The evidence provided by these three cases, however, is clearly of limited scope and is intended more as an illustration of Dye's theory of oligarchic tendencies in policy formation than as a rigorous demonstration of elite cohesion.²

A more exhaustive study of policy-planning groups was conducted by Burch (1983). He examined the governing boards of 10 major policy-planning groups at various periods from the turn of the century to 1980. He concluded that a cohesive policy-planning establishment began to emerge around the time of World War II and that this network has been dominated ever since by big business interests. Burch identified the Business Council as the most central organization within this network, alongside the Business Roundtable, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Committee for Economic Development, and the Trilateral Commission. The criteria by which he reached these conclusions are somewhat elusive, however, since Burch did not subject his data to a systematic network analysis.

Because of the date at which they were conducted, none of the above studies specifically addressed the emergence of a conservative "counter-establishment" within the policy-planning network. The literature that exists on this topic is mostly descriptive in nature (Saloma 1984; Blumenthal 1986; Peschek 1987; Himmelstein 1990; Smith 1991). The main exceptions are two papers by Jenkins and his co-authors. Jenkins and Shumate (1985) tested the hypothesis that the rise of a conservative counter-establishment could be identified with a distinctive (Sunbelt) regional base by looking at the sources of foundation support for policy-planning groups. They found no sharp differences in the sources of funding between the more conservative and the more moderate policy-planning organizations. In a related study, Jenkins and Eckert (1989) examined the social backgrounds and business connections of the directors

of several ultraconservative policy-planning groups and found only modest differences between these individuals and the leaders of more moderate policy-planning groups. The implication of these studies is that the policy-planning counter-establishment may not be as sharply differentiated from the more moderate establishment as some have suggested. Neither of these studies, however, presents any data on direct interlocks between these two components of the policy-planning network.

To further explore these issues, we conducted a more detailed analysis of the policy-planning network than has hitherto been attempted. Our analysis focuses on the top decision-making boards of the 12 leading policy-planning groups and spans the period between 1973 and 1990. The main concern of our analysis is the network of overlapping memberships among these policy-planning boards and the individuals who constitute that network. These overlaps are conceived as constituting a communication network that facilitates cohesion and consensus building within the policy-planning elite. Graph-analytic techniques are used to examine the ties between policy-planning groups, the existence of cliques, and the relative centrality of different groups within the network. Biographical data on individuals who occupy top positions in two or more policy-planning groups are also examined.

THE 12 LEADING POLICY-PLANNING GROUPS

From the literature on policy-planning groups, we identified 12 groups that are most widely cited as exercising influence across a range of policy areas. Following is a brief description of these 12 groups:

American Enterprise Institute. The American Enterprise Institute (AEI) is often described as the flagship of the conservative think tanks. Founded by ultraconservative business leader Louis H. Brown in 1943 for the purpose of promoting free-market ideas, the American Enterprise Association, as it was first called, spent much of its early life on the far-right fringe of American politics. Following its close association with the ill-fated presidential bid of Goldwater in 1964, the AEI sought to repair its reputation by promoting a broader range of conservative views and seeking greater financial support from the mainstream of the corporate community. The institute grew rapidly in influence during the 1970s, culminating in the 1980s with the appointment of more than 30 AEI scholars and officials to senior posts in the Reagan administration (Peschek 1987, p. 27). In addition to commissioning studies by resident and affiliated scholars, the AEI operates an elaborate outreach program for disseminating its views on policy issues, including numerous publications, the production of radio and television programs, and the submission of editorial-page articles to newspapers around the nation. As it

has edged toward the political center, the AEI has alienated some of its original ultraconservative benefactors, forcing an internal shake-up in 1986 and a reduction in staff from its mid-1980s peak.

The reputedly "liberal" counterpart to the AEI is **Brookings Institution.** the Brookings Institution. Brookings traces its origins to the Institute for Governmental Research, the first national think tank, set up in 1916 with Rockefeller money. The Brookings Institution itself was the creation of a mayerick Midwestern businessman, Robert S. Brookings, who in 1927 merged the Institute for Governmental Research and the Carnegie-financed Institute of Economics with his own Robert Brookings Graduate School of Economics and Government (Eakins 1966). During its early years, Brookings combined conservatism on domestic economic issues with internationalism in foreign affairs. Although hostile to the New Deal, Brookings moderated its stance in the early postwar era to become a leading advocate of Keynesian policies. During its heyday in the 1960s and early 1970s, Brookings was renowned for the "revolving door" through which its fellows moved back and forth between the think tank and government office. The break-up of the Keynesian coalition during the economic crisis of 1970s and the right turn in U.S. state policy under Reagan weakened Brookings' influence. In the 1980s, Brookings shifted toward a more conservative stance and added a number of prominent neoconservatives to its staff. Nevertheless, it continues to be regarded as part of the "liberal" internationalist wing of the policy-planning establishment.

The Business Council (formerly the Business Advisory **Business Council.** Council) is reputed to be among the most powerful business associations in the United States, although the secrecy surrounding its activities makes assessment of this claim difficult. The group, which originally functioned as an adjunct to the U.S. Department of Commerce, was founded in 1933, at the depth of the Great Depression, to provide President Roosevelt with corporate advice on policies for economic recovery. The extent of the group's influence over New Deal policy is a matter of debate (McQuaid 1976 1982; Burch 1980). During the mobilization for World War II and thereafter, the council served as an important channel for the recruitment of business leaders into governmental office. Members of the council are present or former chairmen or presidents of corporations, with a heavy representation of officers from the very largest industrial firms. Among the group's most important functions is the sponsorship of regular (usually closed-door) meetings between council members and high government officials. The group severed its formal ties with the Department of Commerce in 1961, changing its name to the Business Council, rather than accede to governmental pressure to include more small businessmen in its ranks and to open its meetings to the press. As an indication of the group's continuing influence over state policy, one 1980 study found that no less than 28 members of the Business (Advisory) Council were appointed to top posts in the federal government in the post-New Deal era,

including five Secretaries of Commerce, five Secretaries of the Treasury, three Secretaries of Defense, and one Secretary of State (Burch 1980). The Business Council is usually identified with the moderate-conservative, rather than ultraconservative, wing of the corporate establishment.

Business Roundtable. The Business Roundtable originated in 1972 from the merger of three newly formed business associations: the Construction Users Anti-Inflation Roundtable, the Labor Law Study Committee, and the so-called March Group. The formation of the Roundtable was sparked by growing apprehension within big business circles over the legislative gains of labor, consumer, and environmental groups and by dissatisfaction with the ineffectiveness of more broadly based business lobbies, such as the National Association of Manufacturers and the Chamber of Commerce. The Business Roundtable does not typically sponsor policy research or long-term planning, but focuses on consensus formation and lobbying on issues of immediate political and economic interest to its members. Membership is limited to the chief executives of approximately 200 U.S. corporations, heavily weighted toward the largest firms in manufacturing and mining. Organized into task forces and supported by a small staff, the Roundtable monitors legislation, prepares position papers, and develops strategy for coordinating the lobbying activities of its members. In its first years of operation, the Roundtable tallied impressive victories in the areas of anti-trust legislation, consumer protection, and labor law reform, leading Business Week (Business Week 1976, p. 60) to label it as "business' most powerful lobby in Washington."

Chamber of Commerce. Like the Business Roundtable, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is primarily a consensus-building and lobbying organization. This organization was created in 1912 to foster foreign trade and provide a forum for coordinating the diversity of interests within the business community. Membership includes 250,000 local chambers of commerce, trade and professional associations, and individual companies, most of them small in size. Given its extensive grass-roots base, the chamber's greatest source of strength has been its ability to mobilize pressure on Congress. It also engages in extensive public outreach activities in the areas of publishing, broadcasting, and video production. The chamber has been dominated by small and medium-sized firms for most of its history and only recently has big business achieved substantial representation on its board of directors (Burch 1983, p. 94). Historically, the chamber's politics have been ultraconservative.

Committee for Economic Development. The Committee for Economic Development (CED) was formed by a group of business leaders in 1942 to develop plans for managing the postwar economy. Over the years, its membership has grown to approximately 200 corporate executives, together with a handful of university presidents. Members are organized into study groups that deal with specific issues of public policy. With the aid of academic experts, these groups formulate official policy statements that are then

disseminated in business, government, and media circles. The CED played a major role in shaping or promoting some of the key economic policies of the early postwar era, including the Marshall Plan, the Bretton Woods agreements, and the Employment Act of 1946 (Collins 1982). In contrast to the knee-jerk opposition of some business groups to all forms of government economic intervention, the CED has promoted a moderate variant of Keynesianism that favors monetary over fiscal policy, automatic stabilizers over discretionary management, and tax cuts over increases in public spending.

Conference Board. The Conference Board, known until 1970 as the National Industrial Conference Board, is one of the oldest policy-planning groups in the United States. It was founded in 1916 to arrange conferences and conduct research on issues of industrial performance and corporate management. Its meetings bring together senior corporate executives from the United States and beyond to exchange views and shape consensus on key policy issues. Much of the research sponsored by the Conference Board is directed toward internal corporate policy (management strategies, industrial relations, personnel management, and so forth); however, the group also commissions studies on topics of national policy, such as government regulation, antitrust legislation, taxation, health care, and education. The Conference Board was known for its outspoken ultraconservative views in the 1930s and 1940s, but has since become aligned with the moderate-conservative wing of the business community.

Council on Foreign Relations. The most influential policy-planning group in foreign affairs is the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) (Domhoff 1970, 1990). The CFR was founded in 1921 by a small group of Wall Street bankers, lawyers, and academics who were opposed to the revival of isolationism following World War I. The membership has grown to approximately 2,500 and includes financiers, executives, lawyers, journalists, academics, and government officials. The CFR is reputed to be among the most "upper-crust" of the policy-planning groups, with a third of more of its members listed in the exclusive Social Register (Domhoff 1983, p. 86). The CFR promotes dialogue and consensus in foreign affairs through its extensive program of lectures, publications, and discussion groups. The most important component of the CFR program is its sponsorship of confidential study groups on specific topics of foreign policy. These groups bring together businessmen, government officials, and academic experts under the leadership of an individual research fellow who produces a policy statement on the topic in question. Study groups of this type have spearheaded many of the major foreign policy initiatives of the postwar era, including the reconstruction of Germany and Japan, the organization of NATO, the creation of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the framing of the United Nations Charter, the Cold War policy of Soviet "containment," the escalation and subsequent withdrawal from Vietnam, Nixon's rapprochement with

China, Carter's "human rights" campaign, and the revival of concern about the Soviet "threat" prior to and during the Reagan presidency (Shoup and Minter 1977; Silk and Silk 1980; Dye 1986). The influence of the CFR within government is so pervasive, especially within the State Department, that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish government-sponsored planning from autonomous CFR initiatives (Milbraith 1967). The CFR serves as an important recruitment channel for top governmental appointees in both Republican and Democratic administrations; approximately one-third of its members have held official government posts (Domhoff 1978, p. 66). Even the Reagan administration, which sought to distance itself from the CFR because of the lingering isolationism of some of its ultraconservative allies, drew upon the CFR for its Secretaries of State, Defense, and Treasury, and Director of the CIA.

Heritage Foundation. The newest and one of the most conservative of the policy-planning groups is the Heritage Foundation. The group was formed in 1973 with initial funding from ultraconservative brewer Joseph Coors and Mellon heir Richard Scaife. The Heritage Foundation sponsors an extensive program of lectures, research, publications, and outreach to the media. Compared with the more established conservative groups, Heritage seeks to project a populist image, hiring large numbers of ideologically committed voung conservatives as staff members and raising a third of its \$10 million annual budget from small individual donations. The foundation rose to prominence with the election of Reagan to the White House. It's exhaustive 3,000 page report, Mandate for Leadership, provided a blueprint for conservative government that was favorably received by the incoming administration (Heatherly 1981). The foundation was also instrumental in promoting a number of other conservative policies that were subsequently embraced by the Reagan administration, including Star Wars, enterprise zones, and supply-side economics. By the mid-1980s, some observers viewed the Heritage Foundation "the most influential think tank in Washington" (Peschek 1987, p. 31).

Hoover Institution. If the Heritage Foundation is a product of the rise of a New Right, the Hoover Institution is representative of the rebirth of the Old Right. Originally named the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, the Institute was founded at Stanford University in 1919 with a gift from Herbert Hoover "to demonstrate the evils of the doctrines of Karl Marx." Near bankruptcy in the 1960s, Hoover shifted its focus in the 1970s from Cold War anticommunism to a broader range of public policy concerns and by the mid-1980s had amassed a \$40 million endowment, the biggest share coming from corporate contributions (Saloma 1984, p. 20). Ronald Reagan, given his roots in conservative California circles, has had a long and close association with the Hoover Institution. It is perhaps for this reason that Hoover provided an even greater number of top-level appointees in the first Reagan

administration than either of the other two leading conservative think tanks, the Heritage Foundation and the AEI (Himmelstein 1990, p. 150)

National Association of Manufacturers. The National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) was formed in 1895 to promote foreign trade; however. the group soon turned to industrial relations as its primary focus. The group spearheaded business opposition to unionism during the early decades of the twentieth century and also provided a platform for business attacks on the New Deal in the 1930s. From its start, the NAM has been an organization primarily of small and medium-sized manufacturers. In 1981, 63 percent of its 13,500 member firms employed fewer than 200 people (Levitan and Cooper 1984, p. 14). Within the top leadership of the association, however, big business interests have played a disproportionate and sometimes dominant role (Burch 1973). The more active members of the association participate in policy committees that formulate position statements on specific issues of public policy. The group also promotes grass-roots education and political mobilization through numerous publications and newsletters. Increasingly, however, the main focus of NAM activities has been Congressional lobbying. The political outlook of the NAM has been extremely conservative throughout its history—even more conservative than the Chamber of Commerce, which it otherwise resembles and with which it considered merging in the mid-1970s. Top officers of the NAM were active in the arch-conservative Liberty League in the 1930s and provided the bulk of the corporate leadership of the John Birch Society in the early 1960s (Burch 1973). Despite recent efforts to moderate its public image, the group's reactionary and obstructionist legacy has hindered its credibility with legislators and weakened its clout as a lobbying organization, resulting in a one-third drop in membership since its peak in the late 1950s.

The Trilateral Commission is another recent Trilateral Commission. addition to the policy-planning network. The group was founded in 1973 by CFR chairman David Rockefeller with the backing of the CFR and the Rockefeller Foundation. The main catalyst for the creation of the Trilateral Commission was President Nixon's unilateral and nationalistic response to the international monetary crisis of the early 1970s and concern over the deteriorating relations between the United States and its principal allies (Gill 1990). The commission is made up of approximately 300 influential citizens, representing the three main regions of the industrial capitalist world: North American, Western Europe, and Japan. These include corporate executives, government officials, academics, media elites, and a few labor leaders. Members meet periodically to discuss problems in the international economy and to promote greater coordination of economic policy between the three regions. In political terms, the Trilateral Commission is identified with what has been called the "Trader" bloc within the foreign policy establishment, which favors internationalism, free trade, and diplomacy, as opposed to the "Prussian" bloc, which is more nationalistic, protectionist, and militaristic

	Moderate-conservative	Ultraconservative
Lobbying Groups	Business Council	Chamber of Commerce
	Business Roundtable	National Association of Manufacturers
Research Groups	Brookings Institution	American Enterprise Institute
	Committee for Economic Development	Heritage Foundation Hoover Institution
	Conference Board	
	Council on Foreign Relations	
	Trilateral Commission	

Table 1. Classification of the 12 Leading Policy-Planning Groups

(Klare 1977). The Commission achieved its greatest notoriety during the Carter administration, when more than 20 of its members were appointed to top government posts (Shoup 1980; Burch 1983, p. 136). The resurgence of military hard-liners and growing economic protectionism during the late 1970s and the 1980s led to a decline in the Commission's influence.

As the above comments indicate, there is variety both in the activities and in the political outlooks of the 12 leading policy-planning groups. In the discussion that follows, we shall make two kinds of distinctions among the 12 groups in this sample. The first is a distinction between those groups that combine discussion and consensus-building with the sponsorship of academic research ("think tanks") and those that combine discussion and consensus-building with lobbying activities of a more overt kind. The second is a distinction between those groups that are commonly identified in the literature as moderate-conservative in their political outlook and those that are reputed to be ultraconservative. Table 1 shows the classification of the 12 leading policy-planning groups along these two dimensions.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE POLICY-PLANNING NETWORK

To analyze the structure of the policy-planning network, we utilized the Graph Definition and Analysis Package (GRADAP) produced in the Netherlands by the Inter-university Project Group of the Universities of Amsterdam, Groningen, Nijmegen, and Twente, and the AL package of matrix algebra algorithms compiled by Steve Borgatti at the University of California, Irvine.

The raw data for this analysis consisted of the membership lists for 1973 1980, and 1990 of the governing boards of the 12 leading policy-planning groups. These boards—variously referred to as boards of directors, boards of

trustees, executive committees, or policy committees—range in size from less than 10 to more than 50 members. The members of these boards meet and communicate regularly and, depending upon the nature of the organization in question, are responsible for such decisions as approving official policy statements, establishing committees and study groups, deciding research and lobbying priorities, and hiring top administrative and research staff.

The first step in analyzing the policy-planning network was to construct a matrix of the overlaps among the governing boards of the 12 policy-planning groups. This analysis revealed extensive interlocks among these 12 nominally independent groups. In each of the three years examined, all 12 organizations were linked, directly or indirectly, to all other organizations within the network. Comparing the three years, we found a sharp increase in the density of interlocks between 1973 and 1980, followed by a moderate decline between 1980 and 1990. Of the 66 possible dyads in the policy-planning network, 22 were directly interlocked by one or more shared members in 1973, 37 were directly interlocked in 1980, and 29 were directly interlocked in 1990. Counting multiple interlocks, there were a total of 42 interlocks in 1973, 88 in 1980, and 81 in 1990.

These raw overlap scores provide a rough index of the degree of cohesion within the policy-planning network. As a measure of the cohesion of specific dyads or the centrality of individual organizations within the network, however, these raw scores are of limited value. This is because the potential number of interlocks between any two organizations is affected by variations in the size of their governing boards. For example, an overlap of five members between two 10-member boards has a greater significance than an overlap of five members between two 50-member boards. To control for this variation, we employed a technique proposed by Bonacich (1972). Bonacich shows that it is possible using matrix multiplication to transform the overlap matrix such that the size of the groups is standardized, while the proportion of overlapping and non-overlapping members in each dyad is preserved. The resulting measure for the standardized overlap between each pair of groups is given by the formula:

$$r = \frac{n_{11}n_{22} - \sqrt{n_{11}n_{22}n_{12}n_{21}}}{n_{11}n_{22} - n_{12}n_{21}}$$

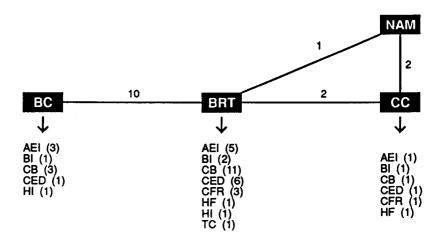
where n_{11} is the number of members shared by the two groups; n_{12} is the number of members in group 1 who are not in group 2; n_{21} is the number of members in group 2 who are not in group 1; and n22 is the number of individuals who are members of some group in the network but not of group 1 or group 2. These scores range from a minimum of zero (no interlocks) to a maximum of one and may be viewed as analogous to correlation coefficients.³

Table 2. Standardized Overlaps Among Policy-Planning Groups

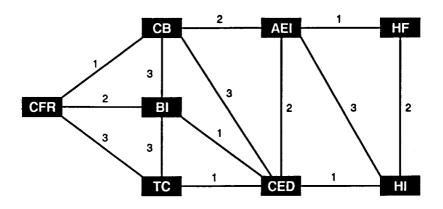
					-			Ť			
	AEI	BC	BI	BRT	СВ	CC	CED	CFR	HF	HI	NAM
					19	73					
BC	.00										
BI	.00	.00									
BRT	.00	.75	.00								
CB	.00	.53	.39	.57							
CC	.00	.00	.00	.25	.00						
CED	.46	.34	.41	.25	.42	.20					
CFR	.00	.00	.60	.00	.00	.00	.30				
HF	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00			
HI	.56	.55	.00	.47	.35	.00	.00	.00	.00		
NAM	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.29	.00	.00	.00	.28	
TC	.00	.00	.56	.00	.00	.00	.44	.67	.00	.00	.00
					19	80					
BC	.62										
BI	.00	.44									
BRT	.55	.73	.40								
CB	.47	.57	.52	.65							
CC	.29	.00	.28	.28	.26						
CED	.38	.33	.29	.43	.39	.19					
CFR	.00	.00	.50	.46	.37	.28	.00				
HF	.48	.00	.00	.38	.00	.34	.00	.00			
HI	.43	.32	.00	.21	.00	.00	.19	.00	.43		
NAM	.00	.00	.00	.33	.00	.38	.00	.00	.00	.00	
TC	.00	.00	.67	.42	.00	.00	.39	.67	.00	.00	.00
					19	90					
BC	.66										
BI	.00	.41									
BRT	.46	.64	.23								
CB	.53	.42	.00	.57							
CC	.00	.00	.00	.31	.37						
CED	.51	.50	.40	.39	.36	.22					
CFR	.00	.00	.50	.46	.37	.28	.00				
HF	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00			
HI	.39	.00	.00	.16	.00	.00	.00	.26	.56		
NAM	.00	.00	.00	.28	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	
TC	.00	.00	.49	.00	.00	.00	.00	.53	.00	.00	.00

Table 2 shows the standardized overlap matrices for each of the three years in the study. An examination of these matrices reveals that certain pairs of policy-planning groups (e.g., the Business Council and the Business Roundtable) are highly interlocked in all three years. Other pairs (e.g., the Heritage Foundation and the Trilateral Commission) do not have any direct interlocks. Generally speaking, the pattern of interlocks is consistent with what

Lobbying Organizations



Research Organizations



KEY: AEI = American Enterprise Inst. BC = Business Council BI = Brookings Institution BRT = Business Roundtable CB = Conference Board

CC = Chamber of Commerce

CED = Comm. for Econ. Development CFR = Council on Foreign Relations

HF = Heritage Foundation HI = Hoover Institution

NAM = Nat'l Assn. of Manufacturers

TC = Trilateral Commission

Figure 1. The Policy-Planning Network, 1980

we know about the politics of the different policy-planning groups. Moderate-conservative groups are typically more tightly interlocked among themselves than they are with the ultraconservative groups, and vice versa. Nevertheless, there are some policy-planning groups whose direct interlocks span the entire range of the political spectrum. This is particularly true of several of the leading business lobbies: the Business Council, the Business Roundtable, and the Chamber of Commerce.⁴

This pattern can be seen more clearly in Figure 1, which shows a graphic representation of the policy-planning network in 1980. The lower half of the figure shows the interlocks among the eight leading policy research organizations, while the top half shows the interlocks among the four leading business lobbies as well as their connections to the eight research groups. The eight research groups form a single connected graph—that is, each group is connected, directly or indirectly, with all other groups. Within this network, it is possible to discern two relatively distinct cliques. The five moderateconservative research groups (the Brookings Institution, the Committee for Economic Development, the Conference Board, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the Trilateral Commission) form what is known as a "2-plex" subgroup (Seidman and Foster 1978). This is the largest clique of size n in which all members are directly connected to at least n-2 other members. The remaining three ultraconservative organizations (the American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation, and the Hoover Institution) form a maximally connected subgroup (i.e., a group in which each member is directly connected to all the others). Two research groups serve as bridges between these moderate-conservative and ultraconservative cliques. These are the American Enterprise Institute (the most moderate of the ultraconservative think tanks) and the Committee for Economic Development (one of the more conservative of the moderate think tanks). These two cliques are also integrated through their directors' common membership on the boards of several of the leading business lobbies—especially the Business Roundtable, which is directly interlocked with all eight research groups as well as the other three business lobbies.

Groups like the Business Roundtable can be described as among the most central within the policy-planning network—that is, they interlock more frequently with a greater number of other groups. To provide a more precise index of centrality we used another technique proposed by Bonacich (1972), which is to extract the first principal components factor of the matrix of standardized overlaps. This vector provides a centrality score for each group in the network that is equivalent to the weighted combination of its propensity to overlap with all other groups, where each overlap is weighted by the centrality of the group with which it occurs. Table 3 presents these centrality scores for the three years of the study.

	1973	1980	1990
American Enterprise Institute	0.26	0.57	0,55
Business Council	0.59	0.61	0.72
Brookings Institution	0.41	0.56	0.42
Business Roundtable	0.59	0.78	0.66
Conference Board	0.59	0.64	0.57
Chamber of Commerce	0.14	0.37	0.28
Committee for Economic Development	0.56	0.49	0.59
Council on Foreign Relations	0.32	0.44	0.62
Heritage Foundation	0.00	0.28	0.04
Hoover Institution	0.47	0.28	0.19
National Association of Manufacturers	0.08	0.14	0.07
Trilateral Commission	0.34	0.41	0.20
Average of all groups	0.32	0.46	0.41

Table 3. Centrality Scores for Policy-Planning Groups

These scores indicate that the most central organizations in the policy-planning network in 1973 were the Business Roundtable, the Business Council, and the Conference Board. The Business Roundtable was the most central group in 1980, followed by the Conference Board and the Business Council. In 1990, the Business Council was the most central group, followed by the Business Roundtable and the Council on Foreign Relations. Two other groups, the Committee on Economic Development and the Brookings Institution, also had relatively high centrality scores in all three years. Two ultraconservative groups—the Heritage Foundation and the National Association of Manufacturers—were consistently the most peripheral organizations within the policy-planning network.

Table 3 also confirms our impression of a sharp increase in the density of overlaps between 1973 and 1980, followed by a moderate decline between 1980 and 1990. The average centrality score increased from 0.32 in 1973 to 0.46 in 1980 and then declined slightly to 0.41 in 1990. A close examination of Table 3 reveals that the overall increase in the cohesion of the policy-planning network in 1980 can be traced to dramatic shifts in the pattern of overlaps of several specific organizations. Most striking is the extraordinary degree of centrality achieved by the Business Roundtable in 1980. During this peak period of conservative political mobilization, the Business Roundtable functioned (as its name suggests) as a veritable "central committee" of the big business community. On its 1980 policy committee sat members of the governing boards of all 11 of the other major policy-planning groups, all of whom were also chief executives of major U.S. corporations.

Also noteworthy is the sharp increase in the centrality scores of several ultraconservative groups—especially the American Enterprise Institute, the

Heritage Foundation, and the Chamber of Commerce. On average, the centrality scores of the five ultraconservative policy-planning groups increased 13.8 points between 1973 and 1980, compared with a 7.6 point increase for the seven moderate-conservative groups. The increased centrality achieved by ultraconservative groups is symbolic of the conservative tenor of the times and arguably an important factor in explaining the conservative shift in state policy during this period. Of these groups, the American Enterprise Institute remained a central member of the policy-planning network in 1990, while the other ultraconservative groups returned to positions of relative isolation in the post-Reagan era.

THE INNER CIRCLE OF THE POLICY-PLANNING ELITE

We next turn our attention to the question of the social backgrounds and economic connections of the individuals who form the interlocks between different policy-planning groups. These persons occupy positions of special influence within the policy-planning elite—not only in the obvious sense that they participate in the decisions of several organizations, but also because they constitute important channels of communication and coordination between organizations. Borrowing a phrase from Useem (1984), we shall refer to persons who sit on the top governing boards of two or more policy-planning groups as the "inner circle" of the policy-planning elite.

The social characteristics of this elite within the elite are depicted in Table 4. The evidence in this table is consistent with the claims of those who view business leaders as the dominant group within the policy-planning establishment. Of those persons who hold leadership positions in two or more policy-planning groups, over 90 percent are top corporate executives. By comparison, other groups that might be expected to play key coordinating roles within the policy-planning network—for example, former government officials or academic policy experts—have only token representation.

The composition of the inner circle exhibits additional features of interest. Not only are the majority of members of this circle from business backgrounds, they are typically associated with a very small group of the largest industrial and financial firms. In 1980, for example, over 70 percent of the members of the inner circle were directors of one or more of the top 100 industrial corporations. Over 60 percent were directors of one or more of the largest 50 financial corporations. Roughly half sat on the board of directors of one of the ten largest commercial banks. Similar patterns are indicated for the other years of the study.

Most members of this policy-planning elite hold multiple directorships in large corporations. (We define large corporations as those listed among the Fortune 500 largest industrials or 500 largest nonindustrials.) This finding is

Table 4. Social Characteristics of Persons Holding Multiple Leadership Positions in Major Policy-Planning Groups

	1973	1980	1990
	(%)	(%)	(%)
Occupational Position			
Top corporate executive	91.7	92.9	93.9
Manufacturing and mining	58.3	57.1	53.1
Banking and finance	8.3	17.9	18.4
Corporte lawyers and accountants	5.6	0.0	2.0
Utilities, transport, retail, misc.	19.4	17.9	20.4
Policy-planning specialist	8.3	5.4	6.1
Labor union leader	0.0	1.8	0.0
Big Business Connection			
Director of one of top 100 industrials	63.9	71.4	69.4
Director of one of top 50 industrials	58.3	60.7	63.3
Director of one of top 50 financials	38.9	64.3	55.1
Director of one of top 10 banks	19.4	48.2	32.7
Director of one of top 5 banks	13.9	37.5	26.5
Number of Directorships of Large Corporations			
None	19.4	12.5	12.2
One	13.9	10.7	18.4
Two	27.8	8.9	12.2
Three	8.3	14.3	8.2
Four	11.1	33.9	22.4
Five	16.7	12.5	18.4
Six or more	2.8	7.1	8.2
Membership in Social Elite			
Elite undergraduate education	40.0	46.4	44.9
Member of elite social club	58.3	51.8	55.1
Listed in Social Register	13.9	8.9	10.2
Geographic Region			
Northeast	55.6	66.1	49.0
Midwest	16.7	12.5	26.5
West	19.4	16.1	12.2
South	8.3	5.4	12.2
	N = 36	N = 56	N = 49

consistent with Useem's (1984) argument that multiple directorships often serve as stepping stones to positions of general leadership within the business community.⁶ Particularly striking is the high proportion of bank directors within the inner circle. This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting a special role for bank boards as mechanisms of cohesion within the business community (Mintz and Schwartz 1985). The sharp increase in the

number of interlocks between 1973 and 1980 is mostly accounted for by the increase in bankers and bank directors in the policy-planning elite. The overall size of the inner circle increased from 36 in 1973 to 56 in 1980. During this period, the number of inner-circle members who were directors of the ten largest U.S. banks increased from seven (19.4 percent of the total) to 27 (48.2 percent of the total).

This extraordinary increase in the degree of overlap between the policy-planning elite and the boards of major banks can be illustrated by examining the board of Citicorp, the largest New York bank. In 1973, six directors of Citicorp sat on the governing boards of policy-planning organizations. Among them, they accounted for four top positions on the Business Council, three on the Business Roundtable, and one on the Conference Board. In 1980, 14 directors of Citicorp (a majority of the board) sat on the governing boards of policy-planning groups. Among them they accounted for seven top positions on the Business Council, eight on the Business Roundtable, five on the Conference Board, two on the Chamber of Commerce, three on the American Enterprise Institute, and one each on the Brookings Institution, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Heritage Foundation, and the Hoover Institution. Similar, if less dramatic, patterns can be found for most of the other major U.S. banks.

Analyses that stress the importance of inherited wealth and participation in upper-class social networks for recruitment into positions of political influence (Domhoff 1970 1983) received mixed support in our study. Roughly half the members of the inner circle attended elite universities as undergraduates and half were members of elite social clubs. Only a few of these, however, could be described as descendants of patrician families. Most originated from small capitalist or upper-middle-class backgrounds and their membership in elite social clubs seems to be as much the result of their ascendance to positions of economic and political influence as its cause.

The popular notion that the policy-planning establishment is essentially an *Eastern* establishment received moderate support. Between half and two-thirds of the policy-planning inner circle were from Northeastern states. Despite the purported increase in the political influence of Sunbelt capitalists (Sale 1976), only about a quarter of the inner circle came from the West or the South—a percentage that has not increased during the last two decades.

CONCLUSIONS

This analysis of the governing boards of 12 leading policy-planning groups reveals a high degree of overlap in the leadership of these organizations. The pattern of interlocks is generally consistent with what might be inferred from the politics of these groups. Moderate-conservative groups are typically more

tightly interlocked with one another than they are with ultraconservative groups, and vice versa. The leading business lobbies, such as the Business Roundtable and the Business Council, serve to integrate these otherwise relatively separate cliques, making them among the most central organizations within the policy-planning network.

The inner circle of the policy-planning elite (those who sit on the governing boards of two or more policy-planning groups) is comprised mostly of executives of the largest industrial and financial firms. Most of these inner-circle members hold multiple directorships in large corporations. A substantial number are directors of the top five or 10 largest banks. Half or more show evidence of being integrated into upper-class social networks. Geographically, they are concentrated in the Northeastern states.

The extensive network of interlocks among nominally independent policy-planning organizations and the predominance of big business leaders in these networks have important implications for the policymaking process. While different policy-planning groups often advocate different policies for addressing specific issues, the common backgrounds and extensive overlap among the elites who shape the general priorities of these groups ensures that the range of policy alternatives will be relatively narrow. At the same time, the organizational divisions and apparent competition between different policy-planning groups serve to enhance the legitimacy of the policy-making process. In particular, those policy-planning groups that present themselves as civic-minded sponsors of disinterested academic research are not tainted by the strong-arm tactics of other groups that openly engage in special-interest lobbying. All the while, however, the activities of both types of policy-planning organizations remain under the direction of an overlapping network of corporate elites.

This study also reveals that the years leading up to 1980 were marked by a sharp increase in the cohesion of the policy-planning network. The increased cohesion during this period was partly a result of the more integrative role played by several of the leading business lobbies—especially the Business Roundtable. The density of interlocks was also increased by the concentration of leadership positions in the hands of a small circle of bank directors. As a result of this shift in the structure of the policy-planning network, several ultraconservative groups came to occupy more central positions within the network than previously. There has been a modest decline in the cohesion of the policy-planning network since 1980, although the density of interlocks remains much higher today than in 1973.

The increased cohesion of the policy-planning network during the 1970s can be interpreted as a consequence of the conservative political mobilization of American business during this period. Previous studies have identified other aspects of this political mobilization, including increased corporate PAC contributions to conservative political candidates, increased corporate funding

of right-wing causes and organizations, and increased spending on advocacy advertising (Edsall 1984; Ferguson and Rogers 1986; Vogel 1989; Himmelstein 1990). Studies of this period often comment on the exceptional degree of unity that was forged within the business community in the face of declining profits and political challenges from labor, consumers, and environmentalists. In the words of Thomas Edsall (1984, p. 128), "During the 1970s, business refined its ability to act as a class, submerging competitive instincts in favor of joint, cooperative action." Insofar as corporate executives are the dominant group within the policy-planning elite, it is not surprising that their efforts toward greater cooperation and consensus were reflected in a change in the structure of the policy-planning network.

In some instances, the increased interlocking among policy-planning groups may have been the result of a conscious effort to build consensus and coordinate multiple channels of influence. This is particularly likely to be true of the recruitment and mobilization strategies of the leading business lobbies, such as the Business Roundtable. In other cases, increased interlocking may have been simply an indirect result of the heightened involvement on policy-planning boards of a relatively small circle of top corporate leaders. The prominent role of multiple directors, especially bank directors, in the highly cohesive policy-planning network of 1980 can be interpreted as a reflection of the greater "class consciousness" and predisposition to political activism of multiple directors (Useem 1984) or simply as an indication of the tendency among policy-planning elites to draw upon personal contacts established through corporate interlocks in recruiting individuals onto policy-planning boards.

The patterns we have identified in the structure of the policy-planning network lend credence to the notion of a counter-establishment within the policy-planning elite; however, the relationship between this counterestablishment and other, more established, policy-planning organizations is more complex than the notion of a counter-establishment might suggest. Ultraconservative groups, like the American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation, and the Hoover Institution, form an identifiable clique within the policy-planning network, but they do not constitute a completely separate and competing elite. Neither can the ascendance of these ultraconservative groups be viewed as the displacement of one elite by another. On the contrary, the peak of their political influence corresponded to the high point of their integration with the traditional policy-planning establishment. Some ultraconservative organizations, like the American Enterprise Institute, exploited the conservative shift of the late 1970s to move from the counterestablishment into the establishment. Others, like the Heritage Foundation, reverted to positions of relative isolation within the policy-planning network once the unifying policy objectives of business were achieved in the early Reagan years.8

Commenting on the convergence of policy perspectives between the traditionally moderate Brookings Institution and the traditionally ultraconservative American Enterprise Institute, Herbert Stein, an economist with ties to both organizations, said: "It's probably true that both are moving to the middle, but the middle is moving to the right" (Silk and Silk 1981, p. 182). This statement might also serve as an apt description of the shift in the structure of the policy-planning network during the 1970s: previously isolated policy-planning groups became more closely interlocked while the network centrality of ultraconservative groups increased relative to that of more moderate groups. This parallelism between policy perspectives and network structure is not merely fortuitous. A shift in the structure of the policy-planning network, we believe, was an important factor in promoting consensus among policy-planning elites and facilitating a conservative shift in U.S. state policy.

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NOTES

- 1. Another reason why some ultraconservative groups were omitted from Domhoff's study is that his research was primarily concerned with documenting the business connections of the more moderate policy-planning organizations. The business ties of the more conservative policy-planning groups were already widely recognized, even by pluralists.
- 2. These data were later added to and analyzed more systematically by Salzman and Domhoff (1983).
- 3. When $n_{11}n_{22} = n_{12}n_{21}$, r is undefined. However, as one side approaches the other, the limit of r is 0.5. Therefore, for this point of discontinuity, Bonacich defines r as equal to 0.5.
- 4. This is not true for the fourth business lobby, the National Association of Manufacturers, which occupies a relatively peripheral location within the policy-planning network. This is consistent with the conclusions of previous writers concerning the marginality of the NAM (Burch 1980, p. 94; Salzman and Domhoff 1983, p. 221).
- 5. Compared with some other indices of network centrality, this measure has the advantage of controlling for variation in the size of boards. It also has the desirable quality of calculating the centrality of each group as a function of the centrality of the other groups with which it overlaps.
- 6. Consistent with Useem's (1984) argument, members of the inner circle often sit on other types of civic, cultural, and educational boards. For example, a majority of inner-circle members sit on the boards of philanthropic foundations. This is consistent with earlier research showing that foundation boards are often interlocked with the boards of recipient organizations (Colwell 1980). A more complete analysis of the policy-planning network should ideally include the leading philanthropic foundations, since these are often major funders of policy-planning groups, especially think tanks.

- 7. More than one-fifth of inner-circle members are from New York City alone—a reflection of the great concentration of corporate headquarters in that city.
- 8. This decline in the cohesion of the policy-planning network was matched by increasing division over policy issues in the later years of the Reagan administration (Peschek 1987; Jenkins and Eckert 1989; Vogel 1989).

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