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Atlantic Drift: Supranational and American Think-Tanks in Comparison

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Political Science

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ABSTRACT

While there has been a significant amount of scholarship on think-tanks in the United States, attention to these same organizations in the European Union has been scant. In particular, there has been a dearth of scholastic treatment of think-tanks operating with an EU-level mandate within Brussels, which this study has termed supranational think-tanks. This study pursued an original comparative analysis between both of these diverse think-tank models. In particular, the principal research questions guiding this study concern the differences that exist between these think-tank models and, more importantly, why these divergences have manifested. In terms of their differences, it was revealed that American and supranational think-tanks diverge through three principal aspects: their roles, priorities, and main constituencies. In offering an explanation as to why these differences have emerged, this study pinpointed two principal variables: institutional credibility and political culture. From an institutional perspective, supranational think-tanks have been afforded an inherent credibility by the institutions of the EU, and have therefore been able to direct their resources and efforts to those activities and outputs in which they have a comparative advantage and can add value to the EU policy-making community. American think-tanks, on the other hand, do not have such institutional credibility, and therefore need to provide evidence of their credibility to their main constituencies, especially in making their case for funding. Further, for American think-tanks, an adversarial and individualistic political culture has informed the ambit of think-tank norms and activities, while the consensus-driven and collectivist political culture of Europe has similarly impacted supranational think-tanks.

KEYWORDS

Think-tanks, American think tanks, European think-tanks, European Union, United States

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* * *

Of course, any errors or omissions within this dissertation are attributable, solely, to me.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AEI—American Enterprise Institute
CEPS—Centre for European Policy Studies
CES—Centre for European Studies
CSIS—Center for Strategic and International Studies
DC—District of Columbia
EC—European Community
ECJ—European Court of Justice
EIN—European Ideas Network
EP—European Parliament
EPC—European Policy Centre
EPIN—European Policy Institutes Network
EU—European Union
FEPS—Foundation for European Progressive Studies
FOE—Friends of Europe
FRIDE—Foundation for International Relations and Foreign Dialogue
ISIS—International Security Information Service
MEDEA—European Institute for Research on Mediterranean and Euro-Arab Cooperation
PLS—Pour La Solidarite
PNA—Policy network analysis
PNAC—Project for the New American Century
TEPSA—The Trans-European Policy Studies Association
TEU—Treaty on European Union
TT—Think-tank
UK—United Kingdom
UNDP—United Nations Development Programme
US—United States

“For decades American think-tanks have ruled the world. They have the finest facilities, the cleverest scholars and the best lunches. They have defined the terms of global debate and provided America’s hard power with a halo of soft power.”

-Adrian Wooldridge, *The Economist*

“With some honourable exceptions, most think-tanks in Brussels are just not very good.”

- Tom Nuttall, *The Economist*

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In 2004, Jacques Delors, the highly celebrated former President of the European Commission, remarked that “paradoxically, the development of think tanks in Europe has hardly been ‘thought’ about” (Boucher 2004, 5). Delors, of course, can claim great knowledge of the role and stratagem of think-tanks in European decision-making, including serving as the name-sake and founder of one of the more actively pro-European think-tanks—Notre Europe, Jacques Delors Institute. Yet, it speaks volumes that the President of the European Commission during one of the most institutionally and socio-politically upheaving periods of the European integration project would note the dearth of attention, or even awareness, that European think-tanks receive. In Delors’ terms, the purpose of this study is to ‘think’ about think-tanks operating within Europe. Specifically, the organizations that will be under analysis have, as their main constituency and ‘field of vision,’ the supranational decision-making architecture in the European Union (EU).

Termed ‘supranational think-tanks’ by this study, these organizations have only come under earnest scholarly interrogation within the last two decades. As a result, and out of deference to the limited though important work that has taken place on these organizations, this study will adopt a unique perspective in the ensuing analysis. Specifically, this dissertation will analyze supranational think-tanks vis-à-vis the most visible and numerous think-tank environment, which is to say that of the United States (US). With a considerably more developed and robust scholarly community working on American think-tanks, this study will leverage the strength of this literature as the main comparative reference object for analyzing supranational think-tanks. In other words, this study will proceed toward a comparative analysis of supranational and American think-tanks, with such an approach allowing major and nuanced

differences between these two think-tank communities to be exposed and analyzed. Accordingly, both American and supranational think-tanks will be evaluated in equal part; notwithstanding the youthfulness of the supranational think-tank literature and the important contribution this study will make to it, this comparative approach also provides a strong opportunity for making equally original and important contributions to the American think-tank literature.

Despite asymmetrical ‘states of the field’ of American and supranational think-tanks, both of these organizational models have benefitted from the establishment of a baseline literature on their roles and activities. Accordingly, this study does not seek to make its primary contribution in the form of a reevaluation of American and supranational think-tanks’ operation and functioning—this has been sufficiently covered by the literature in both contexts. However, what has been missing from both of these areas of study thus far is a comparative approach that can identify and seek to understand the differences that exist between these two models. The main original contribution that this study will make, then, emanates through the comparative approach that will be used to analyze developmental differences between American and supranational think-tanks.

Research Aim

The dilemma this study seeks to reconcile emerges from this author’s recognition that American and supranational think-tanks, though not unrecognizable bedfellows, have developed and presently function as two markedly different think-tank models. Given the ostensible ‘success’ and visibility many American think-tanks have enjoyed through much of their history, the model and experience that has defined these organizations has been widely emulated and proselytized throughout the world, and understandably so. As the number of think-tanks around the world has proliferated exponentially, especially in recent decades, the American think-tank

model has been widely employed by think-tanks at all stages of their development in institutional contexts around the world. In this sense, the American think-tank experience is seen as the paragon of think-tank development, whereby the external perception of American think-tank enormity and influence is sought to be replicated in other institutional contexts by aspiring ‘policy entrepreneurs’ or governments seeking a resource-rich civil society. Whether or not the American think-tank model is appropriate, or even helpful, for burgeoning think-tanks in other institutional arenas is not within the scope of this dissertation. For the purposes of this study, though, it is important to qualify that the American think-tank model has been regarded as the apogee of think-tank development, and this model has subsequently been widely emulated.

Yet, despite the popularity and ‘gold-standard’ status of American think-tanks, their European counterparts have demonstrably shirked this traditional, American-centric trajectory and template. Even more so, when contrasted against the near-global aspiration and emulation of the American think-tank model which has served certain think-tanks extremely well, those think-tanks operating within Brussels have instead adopted a unique path that is largely juxtaposed against the American model. The recognition of this dichotomous development serves as the inspiration and dilemma behind this study, thereby informing the main research question of this dissertation, which is to say:

Why have supranational and American think-tanks pursued two markedly different developmental trajectories?

Before proceeding any further, it is first important to clarify the types of organizations this study will be referring to as ‘think-tanks.’

What is a Think-Tank?

For much of the time that think-tanks have been studied by scholars, the difficulties in agreeing upon a definition of these organizations has persisted. As Abelson notes, “given the tremendous diversity of think tank in the United States, it is unlikely that scholars will agree on how to define these organizations” (Abelson 2006, 11). While the goal of this section is not to ‘re-open’ the scholarly debate on what constitutes a think-tank and where the definitional limits might lie, it is nevertheless important to recognize the difficulties scholars have had in agreeing on such a definition, and how this study can proceed with a reasonable conception of what a think-tank ‘is.’ While it may seem that each scholarly contribution to the think-tank literature has devoted considerable thought and space to articulating and defending a particular think-tank definition, this comparative study would be best served by adopting a definition of think-tanks that contains elements that are nearly-universally employed. Thus, while scholars have historically grappled with the minutiae of think-tank ontology and classification, the purpose of this study is not to contribute to this particular sub-debate within the think-tank literature.

First, however, it is important to elucidate what this study refers to as ‘supranational think-tanks,’ as this term is original and has not been used in think-tank literature heretofore. By ‘supranational think-tanks,’ this study is referring to those think-tanks that operate with an exclusively or dominantly EU-level ‘field of vision.’ In other words, whereas EU member state think-tanks might devote resources and attention to their respective state’s interaction with the EU, supranational think-tanks focus most, if not all, of their resources towards those issues and priorities facing the EU level of governance. Thus, as the EU has increasingly come to assert its actorhood continentally and globally, supranational think-tanks have emerged as an ‘answer’ to the previously non-existent think-tank community at the EU, or supranational, level. As Brussels,

Belgium serves as the principal geographic ‘capital’ of the EU, supranational think-tanks have almost exclusively operated within Brussels for obvious reasons. Thus, by the ‘supranational level,’ this study is referring to the policy-making institutions and apparatus that exist at the post-state level, mainly in Brussels. Marybel Perez, in referencing the same organizations this dissertation will be analyzing, suggests “EU think tanks are think tanks located in Brussels and sharing an EU-transnational origin, an interest in EU subjects and the intention to contribute to EU policymaking” (Perez 2014c, 31). Further, Perez sees think-tanks as “non-profit organisations that provide research, analysis and advice on public policy on an independent basis for the purpose of informing policymakers and the public” (Perez 2014c, 31). While this study agrees with Perez’s articulation of an ‘EU think-tank’ as synonymous with supranational think-tanks for the purposes of this study, the definition of think-tanks that has been advanced will require some minor alterations. The choice to base a definition of ‘think-tanks’ on Perez’s articulation has two main appeals. First, it represents one of the most recent contributions to the think-tank literature, and therefore cannot be critiqued as archaic or out-of-touch with the contemporary functions and priorities of think-tanks. Second, because Perez’s main scholastic contribution has been to the supranational think-tank literature, employing such a definition would allow for a degree of consistency between contributions to these Euro-centric organizations. Thus, by utilizing an amended definition from Perez, such an understanding of think-tanks will be familiar to the European think-tank community, while also incorporating alterations that would broaden the definition to include more of these organizations in a transnational context.

Namely, this study will advance three amendments to Perez’s definition that will provide a more inclusive definition for the study of the diverse and different American and supranational

think-tank models. First, this study will include ‘fora’ as a service that think-tanks provide. As will become readily apparent as this study proceeds into the discussion of supranational think-tanks, the creation and facilitation of ‘fora’ are particularly important for understanding the role and priorities of these organizations. The second alteration will provide the inclusion of ‘assisting’ alongside ‘informing’ as the purpose of think-tanks vis-à-vis policy-makers and the public. The notion of think-tanks as simply ‘informing’ policy-makers and the public implies a relationship between these actors whereby think-tanks are seen solely as providers of proprietary information. In reality, however, think-tanks fulfill and provide many different roles and services. Thus, while ‘informing’ (broadly understood) is certainly a primary activity of many think-tanks around the world, it is by no means the sole purpose or objective of think-tanks. Thus, by including ‘assisting’ in the definition, it is easier to capture the fuller extent of what think-tanks ‘do.’

The final, and possibly most controversial, alteration to Perez’s definition involves the inclusion of ‘independence’ in conjunction with think-tanks, which raises some issues especially with supranational think-tanks (and non-EU European think-tanks, furthermore). The ‘independent’ qualifier that many scholars have attached to think-tanks emanates from the American-centric focus of much of the literature on think-tanks, whereby American think-tanks must necessarily remain independent (specifically from partisan affiliation) for tax-free status purposes. By implication, few American think-tanks rely on government funding, while some even suggest “the best think-tanks refuse public money” (*The Economist*, “Miss the target,” 2007). However, in the EU arena, the reality is that many supranational think-tanks depend on various EU institutions and funding schemes for their existence. If one is to interpret think-tank independence as requiring no element of dependence on the institutional

actors they interact with, then most supranational think-tanks will categorically fail to be considered independent. Conversely, it is the case that most supranational think-tanks are not completely dependent on EU funding. Thus, supranational think-tanks exist somewhere along the spectrum of dependence and independence. It might be more appropriate, then, to replace the idea of ‘independence’ with ‘non-governmental.’ With this amendment, it is acknowledged that supranational think-tanks are not officially under the aegis of EU institutions, though there is a relationship that exists.

Thus, through the inclusion of the aforementioned three alterations to Perez’s think-tank definition, this study will define a think-tank as follows:

non-profit, non-governmental organisations that provide research, analysis, fora and advice on public policy for the purposes of informing and assisting policymakers and the public.

Research Approach

In formulating an informed response to this dissertation’s research question, this dissertation will employ a comparative approach to understand supranational think-tank development vis-à-vis the American think-tank model. To do so, this study will proceed along three principal stages which will, in a sequential manner, provide the first comparative work on supranational and American think-tanks.

The first section of this study will analyze the perceived role and structure of American and supranational think-tanks, independent of one another. In this stage, the goal is to discern what these two models of think-tanks ‘do’ and how they execute their perceived function, with particular attention paid to elements such as funding, tangible interaction with policy-makers (i.e. through their various fora), media interaction, and networking with other think-tanks and civil society actors. This section will allow a demonstration of the most fundamental and manifest

differences that exist between these two models of think-tanks to take place. This section will also possess a historical element, whereby the proliferation of think-tanks in these two institutional contexts will be analyzed, with particular attention to how policy-making and institutional reforms have informed the interaction between think-tanks and their policy-making communities. In this section, the goal is to elucidate the principal organizational and structural differences that exist between these two think-tank models, preparing a basis for a comprehensive comparison further in the dissertation.

The second section of this study focuses on the perceived impact of these organizations, and particularly how supranational and American think-tanks assess and gauge their own 'success' and the standards thereof. This section will also include a consideration of how other actors and organizations have sought to evaluate the performance of think-tanks, including an analysis of how scholars have approached the concept of 'influence' with regards to these specific civil society organizations. Further attention will be given to the sources and consequences of a discord in interpretation of 'influence' from scholars and think-tanks themselves. Therefore, this section will reveal what American and supranational think-tanks view as their priorities, and how well these priorities are executed, from the perspective of multiple stakeholders. Combined with the previous section on the roles and activities of these two think-tank models, it will become clearer through this section that American and supranational think-tanks have pursued fundamentally disparate outputs and goals, and their evaluations of 'success' are one indicator of this discrepancy.

The final section of this study will involve comprehensive comparison of these two think-tank models, focusing on the causes (and, naturally, effects) of their differentiated evolution. Here, the principal original contribution of this study will be specifically addressed as the

previous sections are synthesized and evaluated so as to answer the fundamental question: why are American and supranational think-tanks so different? In this section, two principal explanatory factors will be presented and posited as possessing explanatory utility in understanding these differences. First, institutional factors will be considered, with particular emphasis placed on the extent to which the major American and EU institutions have been afforded formal, legal access for these organizations. In particular, it will be demonstrated that supranational think-tanks have benefited from an institutionalized credibility that has been bestowed by the major institutions of the EU, thereby allowing these organizations to pursue those activities and outputs that add most value and utility to the European public policy community. Though normatively and informally hospitable to think-tank input, the American political apparatus has not recognized and institutionalized the role for think-tanks in policy-making and public policy debates. Accordingly, American think-tanks must necessarily affirm their credibility to policy-makers, the media, and the broader public.

The second explanatory factor that will be posited emanates from a political culture angle, where it will be averred that American and European political culture provide different values, norms, and ‘ambits of appropriateness’ that informs the nature of their respective think-tank communities. Inherently more nebulous than formal institutional analyses, for example, this study will nevertheless be suggesting that the divergences in fundamental elements of political culture between American and European public policy environments have important impacts and implications for think-tanks operating in these climates. Specifically, it will be advanced that American think-tanks have been impacted by the individualist, adversarial political culture they operate in (especially contemporarily), while supranational think-tanks have been similarly

impacted by the consensus-driven, collaborative political culture that is quintessentially associated with the EU.

Methodology and Theory

One of the principal challenges in undertaking a comparative analysis of this scope is the asymmetrical availability and accessibility of information, research, and historical accounts of think-tanks in the European and American contexts. While the think-tank literature in the US has blossomed, alongside a coterminous literature on the deep histories of specific think-tanks, there is significant challenge in simply identifying ‘supranational think-tanks’ and tracing their activities and evolution. As the subsequent chapter will demonstrate, the multiple levels of governance and target constituencies of think-tanks in Europe has made the task of classification and categorization difficult for scholars. Notwithstanding the ontological challenge of defining the specific organizations under interrogation, this study will employ a methodological approach that satisfies two principal conditions. First, an appropriate methodological approach for this study would seek to be as inclusive as possible of the organizations that are being analyzed. In other words, and as will further be demonstrated, think-tank scholarship has largely focused on the most visible and ostensibly ‘successful’ think-tanks in operation, especially in the US. In a field of think-tanks approaching 2,000 in number, focusing on the same handful of organizations can obviously present serious issues in analytical rigor. So, to avoid this ‘tunnel vision,’ an appropriate methodological approach would allow more think-tanks to be analyzed than simply those that are the most visible and well-documented. Second, for the purposes of this study, it is important to understand the perspective of think-tanks themselves in terms of, for example, how they define their roles, priorities, and vision of ‘success.’ Thus, it is important to pursue a methodology that allows this study to intersect the viewpoints of think-tanks themselves with

research and perspectives that are detached from these organizations. How, then, will this study reconcile these necessities in a methodological approach?

This study will utilize a primary source analysis of the outputs of American and supranational think-tanks. Specifically, the annual reports, marketing materials, and other documents of these organizations will be analyzed for the purposes of deducing *what* and *how* these organizations identify and express their mandates. Though this study benefits greatly from the body of research from scholars working in this area, including transcriptions of interviews with think-tank personnel, the main methodological focus of this study rests with the raw output of think-tanks themselves. Thus, annual reports and marketing material of think-tanks are the principal sources this study will be utilizing in analyzing American and supranational think-tanks in isolation and in comparison. However, this study will also take advantage of first-hand interviews—conducted by the author—that involve the leadership of multiple supranational think-tanks. Though not central to this study’s methodological approach, these first-hand interviews will assist in providing an ‘on-the-ground’ perspective of these organizations as opposed to an exclusively theoretical, detached interpretation. In doing so, this approach satisfies the two aforementioned methodological criteria: avoiding ‘tunnel vision’ and ‘listening’ to what think-tanks have to say themselves, from both an individual and organizational standpoint.

By methodologically focusing on organizational output, this study is able to integrate more think-tanks than would be possible if this study relied solely on first-hand interviews, for example. Most think-tanks, for either tax-filing purposes or donor engagement, publish an annual report (often with financial statements) that documents their activities, outputs, and vision. From these documents, it is possible to understand what these organizations did over the preceding year, along with an indication of future goals and priorities. Therefore, by taking advantage of

the near-ubiquity of think-tanks releasing an annual report (or some incarnation thereof), it is possible to avoid the temptation to focus solely on the most visible and well-documented organizations. Second, by focusing on the outputs of think-tanks themselves, this study is able to satisfy the second methodological criteria of being able to glean what think-tanks see as their goals, priorities, and visions of ‘success’ (among other facets). This is not to suggest, however, that this study will focus exclusively on annual reporting of think-tanks as the basis for analysis. This is far from the case, as first and second-hand interviews, data, and research will simultaneously be used for the proceeding analysis. It is therefore possible, through this approach, to serve as a spectator while simultaneously incorporating the viewpoints of the ‘players on the field.’ Yet, where this study differentiates from much of the prior work on think-tanks is in the attempt to interpret the beliefs and priorities of a wide array of think-tanks from their own perspective.

In terms of theory, the goal of this study is not to provide a unilinear theoretical framework for comparatively analyzing think-tanks in the US and EU. Instead, as will become apparent through the ensuing comparative analyses, reconciling the differences between American and supranational think-tanks requires a multifarious approach to understanding these organizations, with several ‘moving parts.’ Accordingly, this study is not particularly well-suited for advancing a singular theoretical understanding of the similarities and differences between think-tanks in the US and EU. However, this is not to suggest that this study will be devoid of theoretical elements. In the principal comparative section of this study, for example, theory relating to institutions and political culture will be employed in an attempt to explain the core differences between American and supranational think-tanks. Furthermore, pluralist concepts and foundations will be utilized to understand how both American and supranational think-tanks

operate and compete within their respective institutional arenas. In short, those searching for a parsimonious, unilinear, and neatly-packaged theoretical explanation of American and supranational think-tanks' differences will sadly be disappointed. However, for those seeking to understand the differences between these organizations from a wide-reaching range of sources, approaches, and theoretical underpinnings, this study will be more palatable.

Chapter Overview

Structurally, this dissertation will proceed in seven main chapters, bookended by a conclusion section. In the subsequent chapter (Chapter 2), this dissertation will provide a comprehensive overview and analysis of the scholarly literature on think-tanks, both within the EU and in the US. Notwithstanding the bodies of literature on these two institutional arenas, this section will also include think-tank literature that, while not necessarily geographically coterminous with this dissertation's area of analysis, will assist with the development of various conceptual and theoretical elements that will be employed throughout this study. The principal aim of this section, then, is to provide a holistic overview of the relevant literature on think-tanks, and in so doing illuminate some of the current deficiencies in the literature that this study will attempt to reconcile.

The third chapter will focus on the contemporary and historical role think-tanks have played in the American policy-making and public policy communities. Particular attention will be paid to the extent to which these organizations tend to focus on interacting as directly as possible with the policy-making process, as well as on fostering a broader public engagement. Accordingly, this study will focus on media interaction, aggressive funding campaigns, the 'revolving door' phenomenon, and competitive marketing of these organizations (among other traits) as symbolic of the highly competitive, aggressive, and 'winner takes all'

ethos that seems to *prima facie* define the American think-tank landscape. The idea is that, through this chapter, it is empirically and theoretically demonstrated that American think-tanks have both constructed and been constricted by this hyper-competitive ‘marketplace of ideas,’ thereby allowing the comparison to supranational think-tanks to be clear and marked.

This study’s fourth chapter will assess how American think-tanks perceive their own success, which is to say the metrics and benchmarks these organizations use to determine how well their priorities are manifested. It will be demonstrated that American think-tanks have, especially in recent decades, pursued highly-quantifiable activities and outputs, and these quantitative-friendly indicators have become the benchmarks against which these organizations evaluate their success, independently and in comparison to their peers. Specifically, quantitative representation of think-tank interaction with the media and invited testimony before congressional committees and sub-committees will be identified as particularly salient evaluators of ‘success.’ Despite the preponderance and increased importance of quantitative indicators (for reasons which will be discussed), American think-tanks have also included qualitative elements for their activities/outputs as representations of their perceived ‘success.’ For example, institutional responsiveness to changing priorities/events, the quality of invited speakers, and the inculcation of networks across the US are also employed as indicators of their success.

The fifth chapter seeks to delineate the structure, role, and function of supranational think-tanks, especially in comparison to the previous sections’ consideration of American think-tanks. The principal goal of this chapter is to present an image of supranational think-tanks that highlights the most principal and acute differences that exist in the operation of these two think-tank models. Whereas the American think-tank model has demonstrably fostered a hyper-competitive playing field, the ethos of supranational think-tanks has largely avoided

elements of competitiveness and a ‘winner takes all’ approach. Instead, supranational think-tanks have been marked by their highly consensual, networked approach that has been met by a receptive, accessible, and supportive policy-making community at the supranational level—arguably, the policy-making community in Brussels has been insistent on the input of nongovernmental actors at various stages in the decision-making process. Further, while supranational think-tanks have not evaded the infusion of ideological elements into their mandates and functioning, the collaborative think-tank landscape has been aided by more ideological homogeneity (typically pro-European, left-of-centre, and pro-integration) than the American think-tank environment.

In Chapter 6, similar to the preceding analysis on American think-tanks, it will be asked how supranational think-tanks evaluate their success. Here, major divergences between American and supranational think-tanks will be readily discernible, as supranational think-tanks have employed success metrics and standards that diverge from American think-tank’s views thereof. Particularly, this chapter will clearly focus on the networked approach many supranational think-tanks have adopted, and what this approach implies for the priorities and goals of these organizations. Specifically, it will be demonstrated that supranational think-tanks have not defined their success in such a hyper-quantitative way as their American counterparts, but have instead focused primarily on both quantitative and qualitative indicators of their capacity to provide networking opportunities among private and public actors in the European public policy community. With an understanding of the roles, activities, and evaluators of success American and supranational think-tanks have employed, this study will then proceed to the principal comparative analysis that represents the main original contribution.

The purpose of the seventh chapter is to synthesize the preceding identification and analysis of the roles, priorities, and metrics of success utilized by American and supranational think-tanks. Here, the American and supranational think-tank communities will be explicitly compared with reference to their roles, priorities, and principal constituencies. By comparing these two think-tank models on the basis of their defining traits and characteristics, the independent analysis of these think-tank models will be combined so as to create a holistic narrative of the major differences and divergences between American and supranational think-tanks. Thus, this chapter serves to identify some of the more pronounced differences, ultimately providing a clear basis for the explanatory framework that will be revealed in the following chapter.

With the explicit identification of the differences between American and supranational think-tanks in Chapter 7, the eighth and final analytical chapter of this study will seek to explain *why* these think-tank models have pursued markedly different trajectories. In this chapter, the principal argumentative component will take place, alongside the main original contribution to the literature on think-tanks. In particular, Chapter 8 will identify and explain how differences in institutional and political culture elements between the US and EU have exerted an impact on the roles, priorities, and constituencies of these organizations. Further, some of the major implications of the institutional and political culture framework will be revealed. In particular, it will be demonstrated that the competitiveness, impetus for original policy solutions, and collaborative dimensions of the American and supranational think-tank experience have been informed by the major institutional and political culture elements that define their socio-political contexts.

Finally, the concluding chapter of this study will identify the principal revelations reached throughout this study, and serve as an opportunity to identify the major themes that consistently appeared. This chapter will also provide an opportunity to identify areas of further research that this study was not able to discuss but which nonetheless deserve closer scholarly inspection. While this study will, without question, fulfill Jacques Delors' desire and call-to-action to 'think' about supranational think-tanks, the goal of this study is to move beyond the over-viewing and typologizing that has defined the literature on supranational think-tanks thus far. By utilizing a comparative approach to identify and analyze the principal idiosyncrasies of the supranational think-tank experience, this study will provide an original and novel approach to the understanding and study of these organizations that has evaded the literature thus far.

This study will now proceed to identify and analyze the scholarly literature on think-tanks in both the American and supranational contexts.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 - Introduction

According to the 2014 *Global Go To Think Tank Index Report*, nearly 60% of all think-tanks worldwide call either North America or Europe their home. Of course, this statistic is misleading, given that of all European and North American think-tanks, nearly 50% operate within the United States (US), with over 90% of North American think-tanks residing in the US alone (McGann 2015, 10). It is perhaps fitting, then, that the great majority of scholarly work on think-tanks has focused on those operating within the US. Yet, given the sizable number of think-tanks in Europe, and their marked proliferation in recent decades, there is a clear scholarly catch-up needed in the realm of European think-tanks (Boucher 2004). In particular, there has been a noted dearth of literature on a unique subset of think-tanks operating within Europe, which is to say those think-tanks operating with a distinctly EU-level field of vision. These specific think-tanks, which mostly operate in Brussels and which this study refers to as ‘supranational think-tanks,’ have skirted scholarly consideration for much of their (albeit relatively brief) existence. In recent years, however, scholars and policy practitioners alike have begun to recognize and analyze these organizations as identifiable actors in the Brussels policy-making community. Fitting with both the relative novelty of these organizations in Brussels, and the infancy of academic treatment thereof, there are fundamental questions still unanswered and, even more noteworthy, questions that seem to have conflicting answers from the few scholars working in this area. With the infancy of research on supranational think-tanks, this study will analyze these organizations with reference to the considerably more established literature on American think-tanks.

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the fault-lines and main areas of inquiry that scholars have taken in approaching these organizations in both the American and supranational contexts, while also attempting to arbitrate and reconcile some of the more profound disagreements and inconsistencies in the literature. This chapter has two principal aims: first, the universe of scholarly literature on supranational think-tanks will be overviewed, buoyed by an analysis of the discrepancies in the literature and posit the factors that might have contributed to these schisms. Second, this chapter will review the considerably more sizable literature on think-tanks operating within the US, but from a different angle than that of supranational think-tanks. Namely, this chapter will approach the literature on American think-tanks from the perspective of the dominant theoretical paradigms that have informed many of these analyses. Given that much of the theoretical contributions to the analysis of think-tanks has emanated from the body of literature on American think-tanks, some of the principal approaches scholars have taken in the theorizing of think-tanks and their operation will be considered, both within the US and more broadly. Such an approach to the American think-tank literature will assist in providing a more easily-categorized account of the now-sizable academic literature on these organizations. This chapter will proceed to overview the universe of scholarly work on supranational think-tanks.

2.2 – ‘State of the Art’ on Supranational Think-Tanks

In accordance with the relative novelty of supranational think-tanks as actors in EU public policy, the academic literature on these organizations is equally as emergent—in a relatively short period of time, several scholars have both identified and contemplated various aspects of these organizations in the context of the EU public policy and policy-making communities. The first scholarly work on supranational think-tanks was written by Philippa Sherrington who, in 2000, analyzed think-tanks operating with a supranational mandate, both in

EU member states and within a supranational context (i.e. in Brussels). Termed ‘EU-oriented think-tanks,’ Sherrington begins by observing that these organizations are a relatively new phenomenon, with most emerging during and since the 1980s. Sherrington accounts for the novelty and exponential proliferation of supranational think-tanks by correlating “the deepening of EU competences, the increased impact of EU policy-making on member states, and thus a heightened awareness of all things European” (Sherrington 2000, 173). Sherrington, in contemplating the function of think-tanks, makes no distinction between supranational think-tanks and the considerably more studied domestic think-tanks (especially in the US context); for all think-tanks, according to Sherrington, “their primary aim is to disseminate [their] research as widely as possible with the intention of influencing policy-making processes” (Sherrington 2000, 174). As will become clearer as more recent analyses of supranational think-tanks are considered (including this study), this view is not necessarily unanimously endorsed.

So how do supranational think-tanks exact their influence in policy-making processes? For Sherrington, the answer lies with the European Commission. Noting that the Commission exercises primacy at the agenda-setting stage of the policy cycle and actively promotes a consultative decision-making environment, the Commission is “a natural think tank constituency” (Sherrington 2000, 175). Thus, policy impact for supranational think-tanks is most saliently exacted in their input into decision-making processes within the Commission. While Sherrington usefully highlights the formal relationship between the European Commission and think-tanks as ‘knowledge brokers,’ particular importance is also placed on informal routes of policy impact. Despite the methodological difficulties in tracing think-tanks’ informal impact, “such [informal] mechanisms play a crucial part in EU policy-making,” and “think tanks have the opportunity to use a variety of informal routes, either within an EU institution, between EU

institutions, within national structures, or between member state and EU institutions” (Sherrington 2000, 175). In suggesting this, Sherrington revealed a discrepancy that has continued to plague analyses of supranational think-tanks up to present. Namely, scholars disagree on the extent to which supranational think-tanks place their emphasis on pursuing formal or informal means of influence, or whether such a pursuit is even central to these organizations. Naturally, this will be discussed in great detail at a later point. Sherrington’s initial recognition of informal routes and call for further analysis of these mechanisms for supranational think-tanks would be directly addressed by scholarship in the years since the publication of her seminal study in 2000.

The second principal contribution to the literature on supranational think-tanks comes from Heidi Ullrich who, in 2004, as part of an edited collection of comparative think-tank analyses, expanded the baseline assumptions and assertions advanced by Sherrington. Ullrich begins by echoing Sherrington’s recognition of the openness of EU policy-making institutions and the implications of this for the constituencies of supranational think-tanks. According to Ullrich, “the EU’s relatively transparent and open policy-making process provides think tanks with potentially numerous targets for their research,” adding that “this broad constituency is a primary reason for the burgeoning scale and diversity of EU think tank activity in recent years” (Ullrich 2004, 52). Like Sherrington, Ullrich found utility in formulating a think-tank typology to differentiate think-tanks on the basis of their role, structure, and constituency. Further, Ullrich was particularly original in devising a typology not solely based on constituency, but also by their primary functions: generating ideas, policy-oriented analysis, and furthering debate. For Ullrich, Euro-specific think-tanks are discernibly separable on the basis of their principle goals and function. However, in the context of the broader literature on think-tanks beyond the

European case, such separation of functions is questionable. For most think-tank scholars, think-tanks are driven by the dual goals of impacting the policy-making process and shaping the broader public narrative. With these dual goals ostensibly ubiquitous, it remains to be assessed whether the European think-tank community represents such an ontological outlier.

Ullrich begins by affirming the applicability of the constituency-function typology in analyzing supranational think-tanks, suggesting “Brussels-based EU think tanks generally fit neatly into categories defined by their activities” (Ullrich 2004, 56). Ullrich then introduces two principal themes of supranational think-tanks to the forefront: collaboration and competition. Ullrich posits that supranational think-tanks rarely collaborate, instead focusing on advancing their specific mandates. This assertion will come under scrutiny further in this chapter as, theoretically and empirically, this could be interpreted as misleading, or fallacious. For instance, Ullrich argues that for European think-tanks, including supranational think-tanks, “policy networks operating across national borders and contributing to debates in both Brussels and member-states are particularly important” (Ullrich 2004, 61). Thus, it is not particularly clear where and how Ullrich distinguishes between collaboration and interaction via policy networks. In terms of competition, Ullrich suggests that there is little competition between supranational think-tanks, to the extent that it potentially creates a think-tank community devoid of a clear impetus for innovation. Ullrich observes that this reduced level of competition (especially when compared to the American think-tank environment) “may be the cause of weakness among the Brussels-based think tanks” (Ullrich 2004, 56). Once again, however, Ullrich fails to substantiate this perspective of ubiquitous weakness among supranational think-tanks. Methodologically, Ullrich's contribution to the literature on supranational think-tanks, while benefitting from the foundational template of Sherrington, added new value particularly by focusing on interviews

with senior individuals in supranational think-tanks and an exploratory case analysis of three of the more prominent supranational think-tanks (at the time of writing): CEPS, EPC, and Friends of Europe. This case study approach allowed Ullrich to highlight how supranational think-tanks execute their mandates from a day-to-day perspective, including considerations of their operations and structures.

The final major contribution of Ullrich's work comes from a preliminary postulation of *how* supranational think-tanks influence their constituencies within the supranational policy-making process. Ullrich proposes three principal means by which supranational think-tanks exert this impact: first, by providing non-governmental fora for discussion and debate, “think tanks allow for the sharing of ideas, broadening of perspective and exchange of information” (Ullrich 2004, 67). The second related role of supranational think-tanks is in serving as a catalyst for debate. Here, Ullrich suggests that think tanks can advance their knowledge in agenda-setting and policy proposal phases of the European legislative process, largely by disseminating their research to a targeted constituency (ironically, not the European Parliament, but the executive-oriented European Commission). The final principal role supranational think-tanks fulfill, according to Ullrich, lies in the contemplation and development of more temporally-unbound ideas and policy directions. Incumbent decision-makers are inherently short-term focused, particularly those decision-makers in an elected position. Think-tanks, however, are not constrained by the professional life of a particular policy actor and are thus able to direct more resources and energy to a longer-term field of vision. Ullrich is apt to note, however, that methodologically-speaking, “the results of this impact may not be traceable to an individual think tank” (Ullrich 2004, 67). Despite these seemingly robust and important activities of

supranational think-tanks, Ullrich hastily and questionably concludes “that the impact of EU think tanks is limited” (Ullrich 2004, 68).

The most recent work on supranational think-tanks has emanated from Marybel Perez who, as part of a 2014 doctoral dissertation, published several articles covering a variety of aspects of these organizations. Perez begins from the position that supranational think-tanks represent ‘knowledge brokers,’ identifying three principal functions deduced from the broader literature on think-tanks, including Ullrich’s contribution: knowledge management, facilitation of debate, and dissemination of policy prescriptions (Perez 2014, 325). For Perez, the capacity for supranational think-tanks to fulfill these roles depends on “their resources and skills, the needs of their publics, and the opportunities the political system provides to broker knowledge” (Perez 2014, 324). Further, given the purported multiple constraints and limited opportunities for supranational think-tanks to influence policy-makers directly, these organizations necessarily focus on appealing to their main funding sources and reputational prestige to ensure their longevity. Resultantly, “EU think tanks concentrate on customised knowledge management and platform development and dissemination among target publics in order to appeal to partners, members and sponsors and thereby secure funding and reputation” (Perez 2014, 326). These assertions will now be considered more fully.

In terms of ‘knowledge management,’ Perez notes that supranational think-tanks focusing on this particular function will tend to be specific in their mandate and sub-area of expertise. By attempting to monopolize a particular policy area, ‘knowledge management’-driven think-tanks will be valuable by means of their knowledge accumulation and ‘economies of scale’ in research for a particular policy area (Bouwen 2004). Perez’s corollary to this is that supranational think-tanks not focusing on knowledge management will direct their research efforts more toward a

customizable, transaction-based research output. For example, supranational think-tanks might seek to fulfill research contracts on behalf of corporate or advocacy groups. It is revealing to note that of the supranational think-tanks analyzed by Perez, it was asserted that approximately half of these organizations were focused on a particular policy area and fulfilled this ‘knowledge management’ role. In terms of supranational think-tanks’ function in facilitating debate and exchange, Perez postulates that supranational think-tanks tend to do quite well in this role. Notwithstanding the attention that can be generated from high-profile, elite interaction facilitated by think-tanks, “by bringing together EU officials, academic and national and local agencies, EU think tanks are providing a space where multiple key perspectives on EU polity are disseminated” (Perez 2014, 335). This role, as identified by Perez, will become central to this study’s analysis of supranational think-tanks’ roles and stratagem at a further point.

In analyzing the role of supranational think-tanks as knowledge disseminators, Perez posits two possible means by which these organizations attempt to garner attention to their research, with varying efficacy. First, supranational think-tanks rarely interact directly with policy-makers in an official institutional setting, due either to the futility in such an approach and/or the absence of legitimate institutional opportunities for such direct, one-on-one engagement. In effect, the main means of direct engagement between supranational think-tanks and policy-makers occurs through the outsourcing of policy-relevant research contracts, typically by the European Commission and, increasingly, the European Parliament. The second means of research dissemination supranational think-tanks employ is through interaction with the wider public, despite Perez's claim that such a wider public does not exist in Europe (Perez 2014, 336). Although the web-pages of supranational think-tank might seem to indicate a fruitful and robust presence in the broader media narrative of the European Union, Perez posits that supranational

think-tanks' utilization of mainstream European media outlets will be minimal, with focus on social networks as a medium of dissemination (Perez 2014, 329). Perez's research suggests, then, that supranational think-tanks are not particularly concerned about the broad dissemination of their research—a claim that other scholars, and certainly supranational think-tanks themselves, might take ardent exception with.

The principal message from Perez's contribution, however, is that supranational think-tanks excel to a high-degree when serving as 'knowledge brokers.' By shirking the traditional, American-centric think-tank model of competition for a marketable mainstream media presence and direct engagement with institutionally unconstrained policy-makers (namely from their political party) (Abelson and Carberry, 1998), supranational think-tanks emphasize their ability to connect policy actors and provide an unofficial forum for debate. For Perez, this means "think tanks are able to gather a wide variety of policy actors, from policymakers to corporate representatives to academics, in order to discuss topics of particular relevance" (Perez 2014b, 147). Aside from the benefits arising from the liberal exchange of knowledge and socialization, supranational think-tanks also benefit from "expansion of targeted publics, increased loyalty from old partners and the affiliation of new partners, members and sponsors, which together ensure funding and visibility" (Perez 2014b, 161). Thus, for Perez, one of supranational think-tanks' main success lies in their ability to connect actors involved in the policy cycle, from governmental, corporate, and civil society constituencies, thereby serving as transaction cost reducers (Perez 2014b, 161). This ultimately suggests that "some aspects of EU policymaking can be outsourced to non-state policy actors, such as think-tanks" (Perez 2014b, 162).

2.3 - Thinking about Supranational Think-Tanks: Sources of Weaknesses, and Notable Absences

From a cursory analysis of the literature on supranational think-tanks, it might seem that much of the research to-date has largely focused on exploratory definitions and typologizing, rather than a thorough analysis of the role, function, and operation of these organizations. While it is true that the limited literature on supranational think-tanks has constrained the ambit of analytical extension, this is not to suggest that there has been an absence of divergent interpretations on some key issues. In particular, there appear to be two principal divergences in the literature that this dissertation will consider. First, there is disagreement over the extent to which supranational think-tanks utilize formal or informal means of engagement with policy-makers. Second, in terms of the dissemination of think-tanks' research, it is unclear what the principal constituency for this research is, be it policy-makers, corporate actors, or the broader 'European sphere.' These divergences will now be considered more fully.

When broadly analyzing the policy impact of non-governmental organizations, the dichotomy of formal and informal influence is often employed (Abelson 1999). Within the broader literature on think-tanks, it has been suggested that the difficulty in operationalizing 'influence' has made it difficult to assert definitiveness in think-tank and, more broadly, civil society efficacy (Abelson 2002, Dur 2008, Chalmers 2011, Stone 2013).¹ In the case of civil society actors in the European Union, the formal-informal dichotomy is appropriate, though oftentimes slightly amended to reflect the *sui generis* nature of the institutional architecture of the EU. With none of the aforementioned scholars advancing a clear, methodologically-rigorous

¹ Even more troublesome, American think-tanks themselves are particularly keen to market themselves as exerting 'influence' in their respective public policy domains without adequate definition and substantiation of this key concept.

means of gauging the influence of supranational think-tanks, assertions of ‘influence’ are inherently speculative, qualitative, and typically demonstrated through ‘small-n’ case studies. Nevertheless, Sherrington, Ullrich, and Perez all postulate their position on the influence and/or policy impact of supranational think-tanks.

For Sherrington, supranational think-tanks strike a balance between formal and informal means of interaction with the policy-making process (Sherrington 2000, 175). While supranational think-tanks are marked by their informal impact on the policy-making process, it is alleged that they also directly engage with policy-makers in an official, institutional capacity. More specifically, Sherrington posits that the European Commission, as the organ chiefly responsible for policy initiation and agenda-setting, is the focus of think-tanks’ formal influence (Sherrington 2000, 175). As an institution which highly regards and actively promotes consultative mechanisms and civil society engagement, it is understandable that a relationship of formal influence between supranational think-tanks and the Commission might be deduced. However, Sherrington highlights informal routes of influence as important not just for supranational think-tanks, but also for the EU policy-making process itself. Though Sherrington does not suggest specifically where informal influence is most salient, it seems likely that informal influence is highest at the agenda-setting stage of policy-making where outside knowledge is helpful in gauging the feasibility of a given policy initiative. Further, it is conceivable that the function of supranational think-tanks as providers of a forum for unofficial discussion would also provide an opportunity for a think-tank to exercise informal influence. Thus, for Sherrington, supranational think-tanks exercise both formal and informal influence in supranational decision-making.

From Ullrich's perspective, however, the formal impact of supranational think-tanks, as postulated by Sherrington, is overstated. Ullrich sees think-tanks as performing three principal activities (non-governmental discussion, catalysts for debate, and long-term policy proposals), none of which requires nor constitutes formal influence. Thus, for Ullrich, it is the informal influence of supranational think-tanks that is most salient in understanding the policy impact of these organizations. While it is not necessarily the case that informal influence represents a 'lesser' impact than formal influence in engaging with the policy-making process, it nevertheless might be the case that the informality of supranational think-tanks' engagement with policy-makers is representative of the unpredictable, variant, and (by Ullrich's estimation) marginal influence of these organizations. Similar to Ullrich's salience of informal influence in describing supranational think-tank's impact, Perez maintains that informal influence represents an accurate descriptor of how supranational think-tanks most acutely impact the policy-making process and policy community. In particular, Perez builds the case that supranational think-tanks not only exert informal influence, but do so largely through circuitous, indirect means. Whereas for Ullrich the case is made that supranational think-tanks engage directly with policy-makers (outside of formal channels) in disseminating their research, Perez suggests that the influence of supranational think-tanks is more incidental and less the result of targeted dissemination to policy-makers.

Beginning with Sherrington's seminal contribution to the literature on supranational think-tanks, the case was made that these organizations seek both formal and informal influence in the policy-making architecture of the EU. With the multi-level nature of EU policy-making, it would seem at first glance that the EU institutional apparatus offers multiple points of entry for influence-seeking organizations. While supranational think-tanks do engage with official

institutions, this engagement is largely contract-based and transactional which, while not hindering efforts or the capacity for influence, subjects the formal influence opportunities of supranational think-tanks to the research demands of various EU organs, namely the Commission. Thus, any kind of formal influence attributed to supranational think-tanks emanates not from the volition and initiative of these organizations, but rather at the discretion and invitation of the official institutional organs of the EU. With this reality in mind, Ullrich and Perez both abandoned the notion that supranational think-tanks focus on exerting formal influence, instead suggesting that informal influence is better suited to the skills and resources of these organizations. Clearly, Sherrington, Ullrich, and Perez differ on the extent to which formal influence for supranational think-tanks is exerted, or even possible.

The second principal disagreement in the nascent literature on supranational think-tanks deals with the dissemination function of these organizations, from two angles in particular: which groups are the targets of this output and what think-tanks perceive as the goal of this dissemination. In particular, there appears to be a divergence on the basis of whether supranational think-tanks disseminate widely and hope that a particular piece of research ‘sticks’ (i.e. aligns with the interests and priorities of policy actors), or whether there is a more strategic, deliberate, and targeted dissemination. Perhaps due to the primacy of Sherrington's research on these organizations and the limited supporting research on think-tanks in Europe, there are parallels drawn between supranational think-tanks and previously-researched think-tank contexts, namely that of the American think-tank community. For Sherrington, the primary goal of supranational think-tanks is to disseminate their research to as wide a constituency as possible, ultimately hoping that a given policy proposal ‘sticks’ and thereby influences the policy-making process. This view can be attributed to the significant literature on American think-tanks,

whereby the goals of these organizations are centered on producing large volumes of policy-relevant literature that is disseminated to as many relevant actors as possible, broadly defined (up to, and including, the wider public). Given Sherrington's primacy in exploring these organizations, such an assumption is easily understood. For Ullrich and Perez's later contributions, however, their respective research suggests otherwise.

For Ullrich, supranational think-tanks focus their dissemination efforts primarily during the agenda-setting phase of the legislative process, focusing on the activities of the Commission in this stage of policy development (Ullrich 2004, 67). Ullrich shirks Sherrington's suggestion that supranational think-tanks focus on disseminating their research to a broad-based constituency, instead suggesting that the dissemination is focused on particular actors/institutions during a particular phase of the policy-making process. Therefore, Ullrich rejects Sherrington's view of the 'see what sticks' dissemination approach, instead positing a more targeted, strategically-informed goal and method of their research dissemination. Perez continues the revisionism of Sherrington's approach to supranational think-tank dissemination, arguing for an even narrower focus than Ullrich. In fact, for Perez, the dissemination of think-tank research is not of great importance to their function—providing fora for policy actors to interact is still the principle, and most successfully executed, function. The dissemination of think-tank research rests largely with the contract-based research that these organizations perform, typically for governmental or corporate actors. For Perez, then, supranational think-tanks do not see themselves as arbiters of a European debate or possessing a responsibility to inform as wide a constituency as possible. Instead, supranational think-tanks focus on their most financially and reputationally lucrative dissemination, which is to say on a contract basis with governmental and non-governmental actors. It is evident, then, that there is disagreement within the literature

on the distribution of supranational think-tanks' research, including the targets and relative importance of this dissemination to these organizations' mandates.

In addition to these two principal divergences in the literature, there are further, more subtle disagreements and asymmetries that exist throughout these author's contributions. For instance, one such disagreement centers on the nature and importance of collaboration among supranational think-tanks, both among themselves and between other policy-relevant networks. While the notion of collaboration amongst think-tanks has received some attention from the scholars mentioned herein, this study believes that this particular aspect of supranational think-tanks represents one of the most underserved elements in the literature. Especially when contrasted to the American model of think-tank operation, supranational think-tanks are markedly distinct in their rejection of a competitive 'marketplace of ideas,' instead demonstrating a receptiveness to constructively engaging with other think-tanks in their various functions and fora. Despite the relative lacunae of this collaborative aspect in these scholars' analyses, there are nevertheless certain differences in interpretation that deserve further elucidation by scholars working this area, particularly between Ullrich and Perez (Sherrington does not specifically mention or analyze the collaborative activities of supranational think-tanks). A further nuanced difference lies in the nature of 'competition' between supranational think-tanks. For Ullrich, there is little competition amongst these organizations, leading to the absence of incentives for supranational think-tanks to 'innovate,' however so defined. However, Perez focuses significant attention in her work on how supranational think-tanks appear to be driven by the marketability, uniqueness, and appeal of their research to the policy-making and private sector community—a priority that is indicative of a research environment where competition actively exists. Thus, if there is no competition among supranational think-tanks, what

would account for the push to visibility and marketability that Perez suggests most of these organizations clearly seek? These, among other subtleties, remain to be reconciled, or at least explored further in subsequent research on these organizations (including this study).

This chapter has heretofore identified and analyzed the principal scholarly contributions surrounding the nature and role of supranational think-tanks in the European Union. Particularly, the work of Philippa Sherrington, Heidi Ullrich, and Marybel Perez were considered both independently and within a comparative context. Beginning with Sherrington's first introduction to supranational think-tanks in 2000, Ullrich and Perez have clearly built upon each other, with increasing detail and scope of analysis. Yet, there are still questions that remain to be explored, beginning with the areas of conflict within the literature. One of the major weaknesses, and thus opportunities, in the literature thus far surrounds the absence of a genuine comparative element to the study of these organizations, first implored by Peter Haas in 1992 (Haas 1992). For Sherrington, Ullrich, and Perez, neither scholar demonstrated a particular penchant for drawing comparisons to think-tanks operating in other institutional contexts, especially those operating outside the EU. In particular, all three of these analyses would have certainly benefitted from a consideration of the causes and consequences of supranational think-tanks' differences vis-à-vis literature on other think-tank climates, principally that of the United States. Though far from robust, there is a strong body of literature on American think-tanks that could be usefully applied, by comparative means, to the supranational case. This would allow a richer understanding of how supranational think-tanks evolved into their present state, including considerations of how differing institutional arrangements, political cultures, and constituency 'spheres,' for example, might have shaped these organizations, historically and at present. Of course, the principal purpose of this dissertation is to elucidate this very comparative dimension

that has, to date, been notably absent in the literature. Notwithstanding the preponderance of questions over answers in the supranational think-tank literature thus far, Sherrington, Ullrich, and Perez have carved a niche area of research that is demonstrably interesting and relevant to broader studies of the various civil society inputs in European Union policy-making. An overview of the literature on American think-tanks will now be provided, though from a different approach than how this dissertation analyzed the supranational think-tank literature. Namely, this study will overview the literature on American think-tanks through the major theoretical paradigms that have informed scholarship in this area.

2.4 - State of the Art on American Think-Tanks

As previously mentioned, the universe of scholarly literature on American think-tanks is considerably more voluminous in size, temporal horizon, and analytical scope than the infant literature on supranational think-tanks. Even though some have suggested the relative novelty of these organizations explains the modest literature overall (Dror 1980), there has nevertheless been a marked concentration of scholarly attention toward think-tanks in recent decades. The purpose here is not to re-examine and analyze the entirety of the literature on American think-tanks—a task further complicated by the absence of scholarly consensus on what actually constitutes a ‘think-tank’ (Abelson 2009, 11). Rather, it is more prudent, for the purposes of this study, to identify the principal contributions to this body of literature, simultaneously extracting the salient themes and fault-lines that define this area of inquiry. It should be further noted that much of the early academic work on think-tanks focused on institutional histories and case-based accounts of specific think-tanks in the US. While such analyses are certainly helpful in elucidating the rich histories and structures of several hegemonic think-tanks, the scope of this dissertation is not akin to a single case-based inquiry; accordingly, these particular analyses will

not be included in this literature review. While a chronological overview of the literature on American think-tanks is helpful, this section will approach the literature through the dominant theoretical paradigms that have been employed by those studying American think-tanks. Namely, scholars studying American think-tanks have largely worked within three principal frameworks: elitism, an epistemic/policy community approach, and a pluralist approach. This section will now overview these principal theoretical paradigms as they have informed think-tank scholarship. First, however, this dissertation will highlight the historic dimension that has informed the analysis of think-tanks, namely with respect to the notion of think-tanks as blossoming in ‘waves.’

In 1989, Kent Weaver, then a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, published an article on the role of think-tanks in the US which, to this author’s knowledge, is one of the earliest comprehensive scholarly analyses of these organizations.² Weaver begins from the premise that, at the time of his publication, the number of think-tanks in the US had been proliferating at a remarkable pace. Noting that earlier periods of the think-tank landscape in the US were typified by a duopoly of ‘universities without students’ and non-profit government research contractors, newer types of think-tanks had emerged, such as the aggressive, highly marketability-driven ‘advocacy tanks.’ Since then, scholars have continued to create typologies in an attempt to categorize think-tanks on the basis of what they do, what they seek to do, how they fulfill their mandate, etc. However, it has also become popular to approach the evolution of American think-tanks through the prism of temporally-segregated ‘waves’ of emergence of certain types of think-tanks. For example, Abelson and Carberry posit four such principal

² For earlier accounts of American think-tanks, see Dickson (1971) and Peschek (1987)

‘waves’: policy research institutions, government contractors, advocacy think tanks, and vanity and legacy-based think-tanks.

Beginning in the early decades of the twentieth century, ‘policy research institutions’ demonstrated a propensity and utility to providing longer-term policy analysis, largely manifested in the preparation of government-targeted studies on policy-relevant issues. Aspects of this ‘wave’ of American think-tanks are most evident today in the scholarly and public policy research function that continues to serve as a bedrock element of contemporary think-tanks. The second wave of think-tanks, ‘government contractors,’ emerged after the Second World War and was, in large part, a response various internal and external pressures faced by policymakers in the US. As the US sought to solidify its position as a post-bellum global hegemonic power, the desire to promote the advancement (and mitigate shortcomings) in new, untested policy domains pursued by the American government created a demand for policy research that could not be sufficiently completed internally. Consequently, government contracting think-tanks were created and supported by a trans-disciplinary ethos that encouraged contributions from both the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ sciences. The ‘third wave’ of think-tanks was most notable for its genesis of the infusion of ideological overtones in the mandates and outputs of think-tanks. Accordingly, the previously steadfast line between ‘policy research’ and ‘political advocacy’ became increasingly blurred by third-wave think-tanks. This ‘wave’ of think-tanks has become symbolic of a fundamental shift in the nature of American think-tanks, from the angle of both ontology (i.e. infusion of ideology, policy impact, etc.) as well as the more operational dimension (i.e. concerns over retaining funding by acquiescing to the dominant ideological disposition and demands of donors). As such, “no longer content observing domestic and foreign affairs from the comfort of book-lined offices, advocacy think tanks have made a concerted effort to become part

of the political process” (Abelson and Carberry, 538). With this shift toward an advocacy role, American think-tanks emerging from this wave placed less of a premium on scholarly research and the recognition of innovation in the scholarly community. Instead, engaging in political advocacy became the preeminent goal of these think-tanks, and the bulk of their resources have become dedicated to fulfilling this goal. The final ‘wave’ of American think-tanks are best understood as providing “intellectual credibility to the political platforms of politicians, a function no longer performed adequately by mainstream political parties” (Abelson and Carberry, 539). As such, ‘vanity tanks’ can typically be associated with particular officeholders or candidates and, as the name suggests, these think-tanks are generally created in the aim of preserving and promoting a policy-makers’ legacy and posterity, oftentimes with the assistance of select wealthy benefactors. Given this historical element to think-tanks in the US, this chapter will now overview the broader literature on American think-tanks through the viewpoints of the major theoretical paradigms scholars have employed in analyzing these organizations: elitism, epistemic/policy community approaches, and pluralism.

Scholars analyzing think-tanks within an elitist paradigm view these organizations as belonging to, and reinforcing, the dominant power structures of society and thus serving as “instruments of the ruling elite” (Abelson 2006, 99). Scholars working within this framework (either directly focused on think-tanks, or using think-tanks in a demonstrative sense) include Michael Useem, John Saloma, G. William Domhoff, Thomas Dye, Inderjeet Parmar, Joseph Peschek, and Frank Fischer. As Abelson notes, “elite theorists portray the political system as being dominated by a select group of individuals and organizations committed to advancing common political, economic, and social interests,” adding that “think tanks not only regularly interact with policy elites; they help comprise part of the nation’s power structure” (Abelson

2009, 51). For scholars working within an elitist paradigm, think-tanks can be seen as intellectual validators and legitimizers for their principal benefactors, leading to what some scholars might label the ‘invisible government’ (Smoot 1962) or ‘shadow government’ (Guttman and Willner 1976). While the nation’s elite frequently turn to lobby groups and private consultants to expediently ensure their policy agendas and ideologies are being ‘heard,’ think-tanks fulfill a different role than those typically associated with for-profit ‘interest representation.’ Namely, “corporations and philanthropic foundations turn to ‘elite’ think tanks ... not so that they can take advantage of their political connections (although this could help periodically),” but rather so they “can take advantage of the reputation that think tanks have cultivated as scientific, neutral, and scholarly organizations to more effectively shape public opinion and public policy” (Abelson 2006, 99). By providing intellectual legitimacy to the policy agendas and ideologies of elite actors, think-tanks are able to market themselves to elite actors and organizations as agents of intellectual influence (Medvetz 2010, 560), thereby bolstering their case for funding from those very actors and organizations seeking intellectual clout. As Useem suggests, think-tanks “constitute the formal interaction between the highest levels of government and large corporations,” thereby affording them “decisive impact on public policies” (Useem 1984, 72).

While many scholars have indeed employed this framework in analyzing American think-tanks, there are several empirical and theoretical shortcomings that challenge the suitability of this model. Principally, given the ideological heterogeneity of American think-tanks, the elitist assertion that all think-tanks advance a homogenous, identifiable elite agenda is difficult to substantiate. With the marked proliferation of American think-tanks and the subsequent increased representation of the ideological spectrum among these organizations, many of these think-tanks, including some of those typically understood to be the most visible and efficacious,

actively oppose the ideological and policy will of ‘the elite.’ If this is the case, some of the most established and influential think-tanks are, at any given time, actively committed to opposing the public policy will of ‘the elite.’ As Abelson questions, “should think tanks that often oppose the interests of the ruling elite be considered part of the elite?” (Abelson 2006, 100). In addition to this ontological issue, the elitist interpretation of think-tank activity also raises methodological dilemmas. Particularly, the elitist framework offers little indication of where think-tanks exercise their influence (in terms of the policy cycle), how think-tanks actually assert their influence, and how scholars, policy-makers, and think-tanks themselves can gauge their efficacy (Ham and Hill 1993, Stone 1996). Typically focused on right-leaning think-tanks in the US (Steinfels 1979)—and especially so in recent years—several scholars have sought to ‘name names’ in highlighting the role of think-tanks in perpetuating the hegemony of the elite structure while simultaneously ensuring their own longevity (namely in the form of funding). Further, the donors to these organizations have not been immune from critique—the Scaife, Coors, and Koch families have been cited as some of the more prominent benefactors to these organizations (*The Economist*, “The charge of the think-tanks,” 2003). Though none of these scholars suggest that think-tanks *alone* are the only civil society actors within this elitist framework, the case is nevertheless made that these organizations are representative of elitist actorhood. As Thomas Dye notes, “corporate and personal wealth provides both the financial resources and the overall direction of policy research and planning” (Dye 1978, 311). Though an oversimplification, the elitist model therefore generally proceeds along the notion that think-tanks provide academic credibility to actors and organizations seeking to advance their respective agenda in a public policy setting. Think-tanks, in turn, benefit from generous funding and visibility from the positively impacted elite actors.

The second principal paradigm that scholars have applied in analyzing American think-tanks is that of an epistemic perspective, and more specifically how think-tanks ingratiate themselves in policy or epistemic communities. This approach in particular has become more utilized in recent decades as the popularity of network and community-based approaches have increased in studying civil society interaction with the policy-making process. Some of the scholars which have provided analyses broadly situated within this approach include Hugh Heclo, Evert Lindquist, Marybel Perez and Diane Stone. In analyses of epistemic and policy communities, think-tanks (and other individuals/organizations) “are invited to participate in policy discussions with government decision makers,” particularly “as a critical stage in policy formulation and regime formation” (Abelson 2009, 57). This approach rejects the ostensibly simplistic interpretations of elitist analyses, and particularly their emphasis on policy outcomes being a result of elite interest articulation, formulation, and implementation. In contrast, the epistemic approach requires a deconstruction of the policy-making process as an impenetrable ‘black box,’ thereby allowing scholars to analyze which groups were interacting with policy-makers at a given point throughout the policy-making process. Thus, the major utility of an epistemic approach rests in the desire to unpack the policy-making process and determine which actors and groups served as inputs into this process. While the economy of elitist approaches might be tempting for those looking for a parsimonious, causal-driven model of think-tank interaction with the policy-making process, the epistemic approach recognizes the plurality of actors in a crowded, complicated policy-making process and makes no promises about pinpointing the exact epicentre of influence, if such a locus exists or can be revealed. In such a framework, think-tanks are viewed less as seminal actors in the policy-making process, and more as supplementary actors. Accordingly, an epistemic framework rejects the oligopoly (or

monopoly) of influence that certain actors in an elitist framework possess, instead beginning from an ontologically pluralist starting point.

According to the epistemic framework, think-tanks will be able to exact their influence most in policy areas where governmental policy research (or the ability to produce this research) is limited or weak, and where such research is therefore in demand. While governmental researchers are certainly numerous and capable, the expansion of policy-making competences and areas of governmental oversight have stretched the capacity of these researchers to provide comprehensive analysis on every given policy area. It is where this shortage of supply occurs that think-tanks are able to intervene and disseminate their policy-relevant research to decision-makers. For example, in the period following the Second World War, the United States was positioning itself to become the hegemonic actor in the international community. Of course, such an ambition requires a carefully-formulated foreign policy and an informed trajectory to accomplish this with minimal internal and external consequences. Here, think-tanks were both theoretically and empirically able to assert themselves as knowledge-providers in a period where such research was difficult to be fully and adequately produced 'in-house.' Thus, as the competences of the American government have continued to widen and deepen, the opportunity for think-tanks to fill research gaps has increased as well. With an increasing ambit of federal activity, the demand to sustain these new areas of competences with sufficient scholarly research had served to increase demand for non-state actors to fill these research voids. Here, think-tanks responded to such demand, and generous governmental funding schemes further incentivized these organizations to provide policy-relevant research.

From a methodological perspective, an epistemic approach provides a formidable challenge to scholars, but simultaneously allows for a comprehensive understanding of how

think-tanks specifically interact with the policy-making process. For scholars analyzing think-tanks within an epistemic framework, the universe of relevant data in analyzing a policy's life-cycle is cumbersome. In the policy-making process, any form of direct or indirect interaction between think-tanks and decision-makers is relevant to providing an understanding of which think-tanks exerted influence and which ones were less efficacious. After gathering the relevant data on think-tank interaction with the policy-making process, the difficult task of identifying which think-tank(s) might have been the most successful begins (*vis-à-vis* the end result of the policy being formulated). Here, assertions of causality are most tempting but, notwithstanding cases where policy-makers unanimously explicitly declare think-tank influence in a given policy, epistemic scholars typically recognize the high threshold needed for declaring 'influence' between a given think-tank and policy. Accordingly, it might be reasonable to suggest that the principal aim of the epistemic approach is not necessarily to identify *which* think-tanks exert influence in a given policy, but rather *how* think-tanks do, and attempt to do, so. By focusing on the means by which think-tanks interact with policy-makers, and which forms of interaction yield the most desirable returns (however this may be defined), epistemic approaches are able to assist our understanding of the policy-making process from the perspective of civil society actors. In embracing this reality, the epistemic approach not only elucidates how think-tanks interact with the policy-making process, but also "offers better insight into the nature of the policy-making process itself" (Abelson 2006, 57).

In addition to the elitist and epistemic approaches to analyzing think-tank interaction with the policy-making process, there are other relevant theories which, although not as popularly or explicitly employed by scholars, are nonetheless relevant to the analysis of these organizations. Further, it is not the case that employing an elitist or epistemic approach to think-tanks

immediately precludes the integration and leveraging of other theories and approaches. As Abelson suggests, “we must resist the temptation to base our observations about think tanks on one particular theoretical approach,” as “no single theory can adequately explain the behaviour of think tanks and their conduct in the policy-making community” (Abelson 2006, 97). In particular, pluralist theory can, and has widely been, applied to the interaction of think-tanks with policy-making actors and the policy-making process.

The principal contention of pluralist theory is that a large number of nongovernmental actors and organizations compete against each other in an “intellectual market” (Easterbrook 1986) in their attempt to garner the visibility and interest of policy-makers. The legitimacy of this theoretical framework to the study of think-tanks is furthered buoyed by the observation that “the American political system seems to have all sorts of gaps and interstices in which research organizations can survive” (Smith 1989, 80). It is these nongovernmental organizations that pluralist scholars see as shaping the outcome of the policy-making process, with governmental actors serving more of a moderating or ‘refereeing’ role among the many voices competing for attention. Thus, from the pluralist standpoint public policy is viewed “not as a reflection of a specific government mandate, but rather as an outcome of group competition” (Abelson 2006, 101). Of course, by remaining receptive to a large number of actors ‘pedalling’ their respective positions and prescriptions, decision-makers are able to become educated and make decisions on the basis of a wide array of views from nongovernmental actors (McGann 1992, 738). Thus, by competing in the ‘marketplace of ideas’ which, in theory, is an equal opportunity arena for civil society voices to be heard, organizations which provide the ‘best’ prescription or analysis of a given policy will be heard the loudest. As Robert E. Hunter, a quintessential poster-child of the think-tank ‘revolving door’ phenomenon, suggests, “anybody can play...there is free entry. No

one institution has a monopoly,” thereby suggesting the system is “essentially pluralistic” (Stanfield 1990, 552). From this perspective, then, think-tanks are afforded access to the policy-making arena, but not necessarily guaranteed that this access will correspond to influence (however so defined). This study, in categorizing pluralist approaches as belonging to the ‘other’ category of think-tank theoretical frameworks, might seem to be rejecting or diminishing the value and appropriateness of these models for analyzing think-tanks. This, however, is not the case. This study asserts that, contrary to the aforementioned hegemonic theoretical frameworks, pluralist approaches are perhaps the most veracious and, coincidentally, one of the most tacitly embraced models for analyzing the interaction of think-tanks with the American policy-making apparatus. So, if the American think-tank landscape is particularly hospitable to pluralist theory, why have most scholars not been explicit in their use of this approach?

First, pluralist theory is not in itself a mutually exclusive framework for the analysis of think-tanks. In other words, a pluralist interpretation of think-tank activity can exist conterminously and harmoniously with other theories and approaches to studying think-tanks. For example, an epistemic approach to think-tanks can wholly exist alongside and within a pluralist model (and vice-versa). It is even the case, this study advances, that an elitist model of think-tank activity can exist within a pluralist framework. For instance, the elitist argument rests on the notion that only select actors and organizations are actually ‘listened to’ by policy-makers. The elitist argument does not preclude the reality, however, that other actors and organizations will ‘be heard.’ Thus, think-tanks of all stripes can simultaneously ‘be heard’ without necessarily being ‘listened to.’ Therefore, this dissertation asserts that pluralist theory is not explicitly adopted by scholars researching on think-tanks due to the implicit embracement of pluralist concepts and themes throughout their respective dominant theoretical approach.

Second, this dissertation believes scholars have avoided an outright utilization of pluralist theory due to the limited value it provides in ascertaining *how* think-tanks function and *how well* they do so. The largely descriptive, macro-level explanation that pluralism provides is helpful in overviewing the general landscape of think-tank activity and their interaction with the policy-making process. However, when seeking to deduce how a given think-tank is able to exert more influence on a given policy over other think-tanks, pluralist theory offers little—accordingly, “the major deficiency of the pluralist approach is not that it assumes that all groups can influence public policy, but rather that it cannot adequately explain why some do” (Abelson 2006, 102). Accordingly, as think-tanks have become increasingly interested in gauging influence and ‘ranking’ their performance against their counterparts (or, perhaps more accurately, competitors), pluralism is incapable of deconstructing how think-tanks are able to have their voices heard louder than others. While the parsimony of the pluralist model is certainly an attractive element for scholars employing such a framework in other civil society contexts, the ever-expanding and influence-driven American think-tank landscape makes the case for a pluralist approach less compelling, and perhaps even redundant or implicit. In short, pluralist approaches, while compelling and appropriate for the study of think-tanks, have been largely side-stepped due to the inclusion of pluralist elements in the assumptions of many scholars’ approach to think-tanks and the methodological issues that might deter the exclusive use of a pluralist model. As previously mentioned, this dissertation will utilize theory in a reconciliatory role as the comparative crux of this dissertation is undertaken.

By approaching the analyses of American think-tanks through a theoretical lens, this dissertation has demonstrated that the scholarship on American think-tanks is neither homogenous in approach nor ‘field of vision.’ Compared to the literature on supranational think-

tanks—where the deep infusion of theoretical elements to these analyses has been limited—there is certainly a sufficiently wide array of theoretical approaches to studying American think-tanks to create a vibrant theoretical discourse within the literature. While elitist and pluralist scholars might be more interested in identifying and explaining the nature of the environment in which think-tanks operate, institutionalist (i.e. policy/epistemic community) scholars are more concerned with how these organizations specifically interact with policy-makers and how think-tank influence comes to be differentiated. All the aforementioned approaches seek to ask different questions about the nature and role of think-tanks, ultimately creating a well-rounded scholarship on the ontology and operation of think-tanks in the US. Thus, these deviations in scope and method of inquiry within the literature serve to enhance the expansion of the scholarly discourse on American think-tanks while also fomenting discussion on the most fundamental concepts and ontologies of these organizations.

2.5 – Conclusion

After overviewing the ‘state of scholarship’ of both American and supranational think-tanks, it is clear that the literature on American think-tanks has sizably eclipsed the present literature on supranational think-tanks in quantity, variety of theoretical approaches used, and scope of analysis. While the literature on supranational think-tanks has, to date, focused almost exclusively on overviewing the organizations and the environment in which they operate, the literature on American think-tanks has demonstrably moved beyond the descriptive level to an explanatory-driven ambition. Despite this asymmetrical state of scholarship, this study will, by its end, be able to serve as a bridge between these two areas of scholarship, thereby contributing to both fields and opening the comparative dimension between them for further research. This

study will now proceed into an analysis of the role, structure, and function of American think-tanks, followed by a consideration of how these organizations gauge their success.

CHAPTER 3: THE ROLES AND GOALS OF AMERICAN THINK-TANKS

3.1 – Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to define and analyze the role, structure, and function of American think-tanks, with a focus on the contemporary think-tank landscape; however, much of the focus will be placed on the role and function of these organizations, with only a modest consideration of their structure. When situated within the broader purposes of this study, this chapter, in tandem with the same treatment of supranational think-tanks, will allow for an organizational, institutional, and structural comparison between these two think-tank environments. Thus, this represents a critical component in establishing the basis for the most manifest and tangible divergences between American and supranational think-tanks. The purpose here, however, is not to provide a *tour d’horizon* of the entire universe of think-tanks in the US, nor does it aim to provide an exhaustive historical component—many scholars have, in writing on American think-tanks, established a sufficient literature on this aspect of these organizations. Instead, it is more prudent and beneficial to recognize and understand the interplay that exists between American think-tanks and the broader institutional, political, and social landscape within which they operate. It is important to recognize, however, that in attempting to provide generalizations on the think-tanks landscape in the US, it may appear that the many differences that exist between these organizations have been neglected or overlooked. To the contrary, the present analysis begins from the premise that the American think-tank landscape is largely defined by asymmetry and heterogeneity and an uneven distribution of resources and visibility among these organizations. As James Smith has suggested, “despite their generic label, policy research institutions in the United states are a varied lot,” elaborating that “they differ in their sources of financial support, the constituencies they choose to serve, the balance they strike

between research and advocacy, the breadth of the policy questions they address, the academic eminence and practical political experience of their staffs, and their ideological orientations” (Smith 1991, xiv). Nevertheless, there are certain commonalities among these organizations that this study will address, and will use as a basis for constructing an American think-tank ‘model’ later.

When attempting to encapsulate the structure of American think-tanks into a neatly-arranged archetype, one of the first observations one makes is the marked diversity among these organizations. As previously demonstrated in the Literature Review, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the marked proliferation in both number and variation of American think-tanks has made the task of theorizing and compartmentalizing these organizations increasingly difficult, if not futile. For every account of think-tank structure and function, it seems numerous outliers quickly negate any notion of a unitary American think-tank ‘model.’ Though, arguably, the contemporary think-tank may not have first emerged in the US, American think-tanks presently dominate the global think-tank landscape in both number, visibility, and purported degree of influence in the policy-making process. As James McGann notes, “the US is the strongest example of an environment in which civil society organizations generally and think tanks in particular can freely grow because of its unparalleled political and economic freedoms and the degrees of freedom afforded to civil society organizations” (McGann 2005, 73). Given the ‘crowded’ think-tank environment in the US, it is understandable that there have emerged a number of asymmetries and differences among these organizations. Some of these divergences are deliberately perpetuated by think-tanks themselves—such as the stratagem employed and targets for funding sources—while other differentiated aspects are less volitional and more nuanced, such as the actual scope of funding and ideological undertones. Thus, given the wide

variety of think-tanks in the US, scholars can extract a limited number of similarities that are ubiquitous among them. The purpose of this here is to do just that, though by no means solely identifying the elements of American think-tanks that are completely embraced by all. Rather, the goal is to identify the major motifs that define the role, structure, and function of American think-tanks.

By the count of James McGann's now-annual *Global Go To Think Tank Index*, there are presently 1,830 think-tanks in the United States—a number which has doubled since 1980, despite a decreased rate of growth over the last decade (McGann 2015, 10). Despite McGann's comprehensive attempt to identify all active think-tanks, for some scholars, the characteristic fluidity and ease of creation/dissolution of these organizations makes providing an accurate count difficult. Nevertheless, as Smith suggests, “although it is impossible to tally all the newly created independent policy research institutes and university-based centers across the country, the rapid proliferation of these organizations has been obvious to many observers” (Smith 1991, 214). Representing over four times the number of think-tanks as the state with the second most populous think-tank environment (China), the American think-tank environment is not in itself a homogenous entity. While reference to an ‘American think-tank’ will inevitably elicit an image of a large, deep-pocketed organization with a constantly-revolving door between their offices and the Capitol and White House, such an archetype is in actuality an exception, rather than the rule. As Abelson notes, “the majority of American think tanks have little in common with the Brookings Institution, the Hoover Institution, the Heritage Foundation, and a select group of other prominent institutes that have budgets in excess of \$30 to \$80 million (Abelson 2009, 17). Weidenbaum has even suggested that the American think-tank community is dominated by the ‘DC-5’, representing the largest and wealthiest organizations: the American Enterprise Institute

(AEI), the Brookings Institution, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), the Cato Institute, and the Heritage Foundation (Weidenbaum 2009, 9). Notwithstanding the ‘DC-5,’ “most think tanks are tiny and often ephemeral operations—the entrepreneurial venture of a scholar-activist, a Washington-based foundation research project, or a political candidate’s short-lived campaign research unit” (Smith 1991, xv). This study will be focusing on those think-tanks that are most relevant and opportune in juxtaposing against supranational think-tanks. To do so, it is imperative and prudent to focus on those organizations that have been the targets of sufficient scholarly analysis to provide an analytical foundation from which to begin. Further, this study will also need to focus on those think-tanks that provide the most accessible and comprehensive internal resources on their own mandates and activities. In this case, this analysis will focus on those think-tanks which operate out of Washington, DC—a think-tank subset which represents approximately 25% of the American think-tank population. Admittedly, focusing on this subset of American think-tanks does not capture the entire universe of American think-tanks (McGann 2015, 10). While it would be beneficial and opportune to encapsulate all American think-tanks into this interrogation, the absence of sufficient scholarly foundation and accessibility to these organizations limits the feasibility of such a course of research. In short, then, this study recognizes that such a choice makes this study liable to methodological critique, but will nonetheless be best served by pursuing such a narrowed field of vision.

This chapter will begin by identifying some of the principal structural elements of the American system of government that have encouraged the development of a thriving landscape for think-tanks to operate and succeed in. In particular, the separation of powers between policy and decision-making institutions and the absence of a strong partisan fidelity among policy-makers will be considered. Second, consideration will be given to the principal roles and

functions that American think-tanks embrace, including thorough consideration of how these roles and functions are actually executed and fulfilled. Finally, the financial underpinnings of American think-tanks will be considered, focusing on how these organizations are able to monetarily sustain their day-to-day activities and operations. This discussion of what American think-tanks ‘do’ will naturally raise the question of ‘how well’ these organizations achieve their aspirations. This very question will serve as the subject of the following sections and will consequently allow this study to provide a clear demonstration of how well American think-tanks’ aims and goals empirically fare in the policy-making process, and the difficulties that inevitably emerge in doing so. The elements of the American system of government that facilitates think-tank interaction therein will now be identified and analyzed.

3.2 - American Think-Tanks and their Political-Institutional Context

Given the sheer number and visibility of American think-tanks, the American think-tank landscape has not developed to its present condition by coincidence. More specifically, the American think-tank landscape has developed and been encouraged by some of the dominant institutional traits of the American governmental structure and policy-making process. As is the case in other think-tank environments, the efficacy and operations of think-tanks are inherently constrained by the political institutional context in which they operate (Stone 2004, 6; Abelson 2009, 5). For example, according to McGann’s comparative analysis of think-tanks around the world, “countries that have a high degree of political freedom provide the most suitable environment for think tanks to operate,” and “open, democratic societies provide the best conditions for independent policy analysis and advice” (McGann 2005, 255). Even among liberal democracies—McGann’s ideal-type for think-tank proliferation—there are vast differences in the nature and role of think-tanks. For instance, in the US and Canada, the differentiated nature

and efficacy of their respective think-tanks challenges the ostensible alignment of political culture and civil society representation between these two states (Abelson 2009). In the US, think-tanks have been assisted in their interaction with policy-makers by two principal institutional traits of the American institutional apparatus: the separation of powers and loose party loyalty in decision-making.

In the American institutional arrangement, defined by a presidential system of government, powers of the state are divided among distinctly separate branches of government. Notwithstanding the various prerogatives afforded to state and local governments, federal powers of policy-making are divided between the executive (whereby the president serves as both head of state and government) and legislature, with veto opportunities provided to each branch in the policy-making process (Saeki 2004, 81; Kelley and Marshall 2009, 510). Thus, while the distribution of competences between the branches of government are not necessarily equal, there exists a system of ‘checks and balances’ whereby decisions in one branch of government are subject to the approval of the other branch (Bruff 2014, 208). In this sense, and quite deliberately, neither the executive nor the legislature possesses a hegemonic role in the policy-making process (Shugart and Carey 1992, 134). In light of the distribution of power among a variety of actors, American think-tanks are faced with multiple loci of power and a significant number of individuals personifying this distribution of power (Abelson 2000, 223). While this might ostensibly provide think-tanks with logistical hurdles to engaging with a wide variety of policy-makers throughout the various institutions, it is also true that the wide distribution of power affords think-tanks multiple channels of access and opportunities for engagement with policy-makers. Accordingly, American think-tanks do not operate within an ‘all-or-nothing’ arrangement with policy-makers, whereby one actor’s rejection or defection from a think-tank’s

proposals or analysis limits the ability of a think-tank to successfully engage with other policy-makers. Instead, with 535 voting members in the House of Representatives and Senate, American think-tanks possess a significant number of institutional actors to engage with and disseminate their message.

The second institutional aspect of the American political system that has been critical for understanding think-tank development and proliferation in the US is the nature of the relationship between policy-makers and their respective political party. While the US is a quintessential case-study of a two-party system, the degree of fidelity between policy actors and their political party is weak, whereby fidelity represents the degree to which policy-makers are compelled to ‘toe the line’ of their political party (McCarty et al. 2001, 686; Nokken and Poole 2004, 565; Brown 2012, 197). While a policy actor’s identification with a political party can be particularly crucial during electoral campaign periods, once in office, the individual policy-maker’s ideological will and constituent’s preferences trump considerations of party unity (Levitt 1996, 438). With the absence of a strong ‘whip’ function among the political parties, policy-makers have a high degree of discretion in the decision-making process. Accordingly, without directives from party leadership on ‘how to vote,’ individual policy-makers reach their own conclusions about the direction of a given policy. With such autonomy in the decision-making process, policy-makers necessarily rely on external actors, groups, and constituents in formulating the most effective appraisal of a given policy. Here, American think-tanks are able to approach policy-makers with their research, analysis, and proposals, recognizing that each policy-maker largely represents his or her free will in making their policy choices (Hall and Deardorff 2006, 76; Bertelli and Wenger 2008, 228). Furthermore, some scholars have suggested that the increasing polarization of party competition in the US Congress has created a high

degree of uncertainty in policy outcomes, more so than in situations where there is a more uniform alignment with decision-makers' party affiliation and policy-making choices/preferences (Gray et al. 2005, 413). Thus, think-tanks are able to capitalize on this uncertainty by disseminating their research and analysis into the policy debate. In addition to facing a wide variety of actors in multiple institutional loci, the absence of a strong tradition of party loyalty in vote-casting allows think-tanks to treat all policy-makers as potentially receptive to external input and, ultimately, subject to persuasion.

Evidently, the institutional makeup of the American political system has afforded think-tanks opportunities to engage with a wide variety of actors who are, generally, receptive to external input. Thus, the separation of powers and the limited party fidelity among policy-makers have allowed think-tanks to thrive, whereas the absence of these institutional traits might have, counterfactually, obfuscated and hindered the development of the present think-tank landscape (as has been the case in other think-tank environments).

3.3 – Seeking to be ‘Heard’: What do American Think-Tanks ‘Do’?

This study suggests that American think-tanks have pursued two principal, overriding objectives in their short and long-term ambitions. First, American think-tanks have sought to assert their influence through demonstrating an observable impact in the policy-making process, the manifestation of which will be discussed further both presently and in the subsequent analysis on how think-tanks have sought to measure their influence. This particular goal, by its nature, represents a shorter timeframe in which think-tanks seek to exercise their influence. The lifespan of a particular piece of legislation, for example, is considerably more limited than the lifespan of an ideological agenda, which inherently requires a longer-term field of vision that can certainly build upon the legislation of ideologically favourable policy. It should be further noted

that, in seeking to impact the outcome of the policy-making process, American think-tanks exercise both formal and informal means of influence; these two approaches to influence are not mutually exclusive in this case, as will be demonstrated. The important point, however, is that think-tanks do devote considerable effort and resources to imprinting their voices on the direction and outcome of policy debates throughout the American institutional, policy-making apparatus. The specific strategies and approaches think-tanks have used in pursuing this goal will be considered and delineated more fully.

The second principal goal American think-tanks have pursued lends to a longer-term ‘field of vision’ that provides a less deducible, metricized benchmark of success or failure than the success or failure of a particular piece of legislation. Specifically, the second goal of American think-tanks is to frame the national public policy discourse and narrative within the ideological underpinning that most think-tanks implicitly, or explicitly, embrace. As David Ricci has succinctly observed, “whatever the size or scope of interest, the intent [of think tanks] is to discuss policy-relevant ideas with elected officials, bureaucrats, reporters, financial patrons, interest groups, and various sectors of the public at large” (Ricci 1991, 1). Unlike interest groups and lobby groups which are typically understood to possess a short-term field of vision in impacting the immediate outcome of policy-making, think-tanks are also simultaneously broadly and normatively invested in the advancement of their ideological vision for US public policy. Methodologically, this second goal of think-tanks does not bode particularly well to scholars seeking to gauge the success or failure thereof. These two goals will now be discussed and analyzed in further depth; at a later point in this study, consideration will be given to how think-tanks and other actors/groups have sought to gauge the fulfillment of these goals.

3.4 – How do American Think-Tanks Seek to Impact Policy?

3.4.1 – Formal

As previously mentioned, the first principal goal of American think-tanks is to exert influence in the policy-making process. To do so, these organizations utilize and leverage both formal and informal means to have their voices heard. When this study refers to formal influence, it should be kept in mind that ‘influence,’ in this context, is not tantamount to ‘power,’ with the principal distinction being the absence of institutionalization in the former. Whereas ‘power’ denotes an institutional and enshrined policy-making role, ‘influence’ reflects the capacity of non-state actors to impact the outcomes of policy-making. Thus, American think-tanks can exercise formal influence in the policy-making process by directly engaging with the policy-making process in a consultative relationship, despite their lack of ‘power’ in this process. The principal (documented) way in which think-tanks have formally engaged with the policy-making process has been through the delivery of testimony before Congressional committees and sub-committees (Abelson 2006, 148). For example, in a compilation of invited American think-tank testimony before Congress in discussing the American domestic and foreign policy response to the events of September 11 and the subsequent ‘War on Terror,’ Abelson revealed a surprisingly consistent relationship between several of the most qualitatively prominent, visible think-tanks and the various committees and sub-committees in the House of Representatives and Senate. For instance, between 2001 and 2005, the Senate and House committees on the Armed Services, Foreign Relations, and Intelligence welcomed input from approximately the same ten think-tanks. Among the think-tanks invited to deliver testimony before these committees, there was little surprise as to which think-tanks were most visible—Brookings, the Heritage Foundation, and AEI were represented on each of these committees in both the House and Senate

(Abelson 2006, 268). Curiously, and perhaps a testament to a possible ‘selection bias’ among incumbent policy-makers, many of the think-tanks that were widely represented among the committees and sub-committees are aligned with a right-leaning, and arguably neoconservative, ideology that has been entrenched in the long histories of many of these organizations (The Brookings Institution notwithstanding, despite an early history of a right-leaning disposition). It should be noted that this particular ideological suasion, while oftentimes interpreted as an idiosyncrasy of the American think-tank community, is not as parochial as caricatured (Denham 1996). If there was an anomaly among these think-tanks, it was the ubiquity of testimony from the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) among these committees. A small, modestly-budgeted newcomer to the American think-tank landscape, PNAC benefitted mostly from the robust list of highly recognizable, policy-experienced signatories to the published mandate of the organization (Abelson 2006, 94). This particular temporal period, in which the foreign policy ambitions of the US were extending aggressively in multiple directions, has demonstrated that select American think-tanks have been able to assert themselves as frequent contributors to the internal policy analysis within both the Senate and the House of Representatives. Why have think-tanks sought to ingratiate themselves as experts in the institutional policy-making process? It will be posited that there exist three principal benefits that American think-tanks have reaped from their involvement with Congressional testimony and consultation.

First, by appearing before Congressional committees and sub-committees, American think-tanks are able to cultivate an impression of credibility. By receiving formal recognition from policy-makers as ostensibly possessing policy-relevant research and disseminating this research to policy-makers, think-tanks are able to utilize these opportunities as a demonstration of their policy relevance and expertise. As Kent Weaver and James McGann suggest, “policy

makers need basic information about the societies they govern, about how current policies are working, as well as possible alternatives and their likely costs and consequences” (McGann 2000, 1). Because American think-tanks place a high premium on their efforts to influence and impact the policy-making process, presenting their research and prescriptions directly to policy-makers (and at their invitation, no less) is a clear affirmation of a given think-tank’s opportunity and willingness to exert such influence. Subsequently, think-tanks are able to leverage this credibility in heightening their appropriateness for interaction with the popular media, as well as their ability to lure donors on the basis of their credibility. Second, presenting research and findings before Congressional committees provides an opportunity for think-tanks to garner media attention, especially on particularly high-profile or sensitive policy areas. To use the aforementioned example of the period following the September 11 terrorist attacks, the findings and recommendations of the Congressional committees related to foreign affairs and intelligence were particularly poignant and salient to the priorities of the American government at the time. Naturally, the American media took an exceptional interest in these proceedings. Accordingly, think-tanks testifying before committees and sub-committees on these pressing domestic security and foreign policy concerns benefitted from heightened media awareness and interest in their testimonies. As will be discussed shortly, the relationship between the media and think-tanks is particularly critical in the American context, so the opportunity to present before committees clearly serves multiple purposes.

The final major benefit American think-tanks reap from being able to interact directly with policy-makers in a policy-making environment is that such an opportunity provides think-tanks with the most direct means by which to promote and advance their ideological agenda. With the direct attention and focus of policy-makers, think-tanks are able to not just provide the

relevant facts and details about a given topic, but they are also availed of the opportunity to infuse their particular ideological interpretation and analysis thereof. Thus, think-tanks do not view their invitations to testify before Congressional committees as an opportunity solely for fact-finding and disseminating; it is their interpretation of these facts that is most lucrative for think-tanks in this environment. In short, by testifying before Congressional committees and subcommittees, American think-tanks are able to bolster their credibility to donors and policy-makers, increase their media profile, and promulgate their ideological vision through the recommendation and advisement on policy initiatives. It should be noted that, although think-tanks regularly tout their successes and perceived influence, “no think tank is quite as influential as it claims to be, especially in its messages to its financial supporters” (Weidenbaum 2009, 2). The nature of this influence, the measurement thereof, and how think-tanks gauge their success will be developed more fully in subsequent analysis. Some analysts, however, have conflated the ‘influence’ of certain think-tanks with institutional ‘power,’ at times exaggerating to the point of conspiratorial overtones. For example, in a monograph overviewing the history, structure, and activities of the Council on Foreign Relations, Laurence Shoup opens by suggesting “the think tank of monopoly-finance capital, the Council on Foreign Relations is the world’s most powerful private organization,” adding that “no matter who is elected, people from the Council propose, debate, develop consensus, and implement the nation’s key strategic policies” (Shoup 2015, 7). Needless to say, interpretations similar to Shoup’s typically emanate from a particular political, ideological, or partisan vantage point, and reasonable benchmarks of academic rigor and methodology are generally eluded in these studies.

A second means by which American think-tanks are able to exercise formal influence emanates from the infusion of think-tank personnel into the policy-making community and, in

reverse order, by welcoming former policy-makers and policy actors into think-tanks. Often referred to as the ‘revolving door’ phenomenon, the caricature exists of think-tank scholars and policy-makers moving freely and seamlessly between government appointments/positions and think-tanks, carrying their rolodexes (or, rather, smart-phone address books) and socio-political clout with them in either direction. For Smith, these actors constituting the ‘revolving door’ “are the most famous individual members of the policy elite, accorded special deference for having weathered the practical trials of policy responsibility and for their academic expertise,” garnered from their roles as “counselor to kings” (Smith 1991, 224). Of course, in most cases such movement is surely not nearly as fluid as the caricature suggests (and, perhaps, the door does not revolve as fast either). For instance, between presidential administrations, the nature, size, and ‘speed’ of the ‘revolving door’ varies significantly (Etzion and David 2008, 161). Yet, it is the case that there is a clear policy-maker ‘talent pool’ that think-tanks seek to draw from, and to varying degrees of success. Weaver and McGann note that “because think tanks serve as repositories for policy-oriented expertise, they play a very important human resource function for new governments that are filling policy making positions from outside the bureaucracy,” adding that “think tanks may also help train the next generation of policy makers through internship and fellowship programs” (Weaver and McGann 2000, 6). This reality has even inspired one journalist to label think-tanks as “citadels for public intellectuals” (Samuelson 2007, A17). Given that many policy-makers do not hold the qualifications many think-tank scholars possess (typically a doctorate degree, record of scholarly publication, etc.), why do think-tanks seek out former policy-makers to join their organizations? There are two main reasons for this, which will now be identified.

The first attractive element of former policy-makers to think-tanks stems from the ability of former policy-makers to increase the visibility of think-tanks by virtue of their name recognition and policy-making track record. Thus, think-tanks benefit tremendously from the ability of a former policy-maker to command name-recognition in their appointment to a think-tank, and beyond. Namely, think-tanks are able to leverage the policy-makers' clout to make compelling cases for funding and donations from individuals and/or organizations who are both familiar and fond of the particular policy-maker-cum-think-tank-resident. Second, former policy-makers bring not only their name-recognition and policy-making expertise, but they also typically bring a wide network of policy-makers that can be targeted and exploited by think-tanks. Whether it is as simple as convincing a policy-maker to attend a think-tank's conference or seminar, or arguing the merits of a think-tank's proposal directly with a policy-maker, individuals on either exit of the 'revolving door' can be especially helpful in facilitating these interactions. Therefore, think-tanks are particularly keen to attract high-profile former policy-makers in the hopes that they will increase the recognition of the think-tank (and, hopefully, translate this into funding) and provide an expanded network of policy-makers to engage with. Though arguably one of the most effective means of formal influence, the 'revolving door' is not the sole means by which American think-tank scholars engage with the policy-making process before, during, and after their tenure at these organizations. In particular, there are three other means by which think-tanks engage with policy-makers in a formal sense.

First, during presidential campaigns and elections, and especially the increasingly lengthy leadership campaigns leading up to elections, think-tanks are often viewed as a source of policy expertise. Internally, presidential campaign teams might neither have access to specific issue knowledge themselves nor possess the capacity to adequately research and analyze these issues

within their campaign teams. Here, think-tanks are able to offer themselves as sources of policy expertise which, in addition to infusing their ideological interpretation into their advice to aspiring officeholders, invites the development of a closer connection between think-tanks and the individual/team that might ascend to the presidency (Abelson 2000, 225). Further, in the event of a successful presidential campaign, think-tanks active in the campaign period are oftentimes ensconced even deeper in the president-elect's policy development, particularly during the transition period into office. For example, and at the time of writing, although Donald Trump has branded himself as a detached, independent outsider in formulating his American presidential campaign platform, he has nevertheless sought the expertise and credibility of think-tank personnel through the course of his campaign. Thus, if think-tanks are able to prove their utility to presidential candidates during the campaign, opportunities may arise for individuals from these organizations to exercise even further influence within the executive branch of government. Second, several of the more prominent, well-funded American think-tanks have established liaison offices with both the House of Representatives and the Senate. In doing so, this "allows think tanks to monitor and track the most important issues on the floor of the House and Senate, which, in turn, helps them to prepare the type of research policy-makers require to make critical choices" (Abelson 2006, 154). Thus, by availing themselves to congressmen and senators, think-tanks are able to entrench themselves as a reliable, convenient, and easily accessible source of policy expertise on issues critical and topical to policy-makers. Finally, think-tanks assert themselves in the formal policy-making structure by 'placing' think-tank scholars and figures in cabinet, sub-cabinet, and positions in the bureaucracy. Though it is certainly a simplification to suggest that think-tanks independently and autonomously 'place' individuals in these roles, the aforementioned connections forged between think-tanks and

policy-makers, especially at the higher levels, affords a degree of repute and reliability that might encourage senior policy-makers to recruit individuals from think-tanks. This particular means of formal influence most clearly espouses the ‘revolving door’ phenomenon; there are few better ways, after all, for think-tanks to have their voices heard by policy-makers than through their affiliated scholars working and interacting directly with the policy-making process they seek to influence. Following their tenure in a policy-making capacity, these individuals would then typically return to their respective think-tanks to continue their goal of influencing the policy-making process, as per the circular rhythm of the ‘revolving door.’

3.4.2 – Informal

While the vast majority of scholars at American think-tanks are not afforded the privilege of regularly testifying before Congressional committees and sub-committees, virtually all think-tanks are able to pursue informal means of impacting the policy-making process and outcomes—naturally, with asymmetrical degrees of success. As previously noted, American think-tanks are interested not only in impacting policy-making, but are also occupied in shaping the broader narratives on public policy issues and directions. Given the inherently nebulous nature of ‘public narratives’ (not to mention gauging success in doing so), American think-tanks rely on several key activities and outputs to regulate the discussion and debate on particular public policy areas. Thus, with varying degrees of success, American think-tanks use informal means in attempting to inspire a favorable policy-making outcomes and shaping the broader public narrative/conversation in a given policy domain. As Weidenbaum suggests, “think tanks are key sources of information and expertise for those who debate vital national issues in the halls of Congress as well as for the omnipresent media who report the ebbs and flows of power and influence in the nation’s capital” (Weidenbaum 2009, 2). In particular, there are three principal

means by which American think-tanks seek to exert informal influence in the policy-making process and the broader national narrative: disseminating research through publications, organizing and hosting forums around policy-relevant themes, and regularly engaging and availing themselves to the media. These three informal means of influence will now be considered more fully.

Often referred to as ‘universities without students,’ and notwithstanding a shift in the think-tank disposition toward political advocacy,³ American think-tanks require intellectual and research clout to establish their credibility and disseminate their policy-relevant analysis. As organizations dedicated to the production and promotion of policy-relevant research and analysis, the dissemination of think-tanks’ research output remains a salient objective of these organizations. As Abelson suggests, “many [think-tanks]...rely on opinion magazines, journals, newsletters, and books to reach their various target audiences” (Abelson 2006, 151). Juxtaposed against the nature of publications in academia, whereby a rigorous peer-review process imposes a lengthy publication timeline and the oftentimes necessary infusion of theory, think-tanks focus on disseminating their research through mediums that facilitate expedited publication, allowing their research to reach target audiences in a timely and apropos manner. Though American think-tank scholars do publish their research within scholarly journals and produce scholarly monographs, the desire to provide policy-relevant, topical research tends to force think-tanks to focus on more expedient routes of publication. As such, scholars from American think-tanks are frequently well-represented in opinion magazines, policy journals, as well as publications emanating from think-tanks themselves. Especially in the 21st century, American think-tanks have increasingly come to rely on their Internet webpages as one of the primary modes of

³ For a strong overview of this shift, see Troy (2012)

publication and dissemination among their target constituencies—it is clearly more convenient and expedient to refer to the website of a given think-tank than seek out a column in a physical policy journal. Thus, through academic and non-academic publications, in print and online, American think-tanks seek to disseminate their research and analysis to a wide constituency. How does the production and publication of research afford the opportunity for American think-tanks to exercise informal influence? Two principal benefits think-tanks provide to policy-makers by pursuing this means of informal influence, both of which will now be highlighted.

First, by focusing on the expedient release of research on policy-relevant topics and themes, American think-tanks are able to project their ‘narrative’ and parameters of debate on topical policy issues and dilemmas. Thus, “at times think tanks set the agenda for those important debates by focusing attention on emerging national concerns or presenting new approaches to solving problems already widely recognized” (Weidenbaum 2009, 2). Unlike the publication of monographs and scholarly journal articles, which might face editorial and publication delays from months to years, publishing in opinion magazines, non-academic journals, newsletters, and blog posts (among other mediums) allows think-tanks to provide relevant research and analysis on pressing policy issues. Policy-makers, in particular, are keen to receive a wide array of interpretations and viewpoints on a given policy topic, especially areas that are under-served by internal research and the research limitations of their offices or departments (Bertelli and Wenger 2008, 232). Recognizing these shortcomings in awareness, knowledge, and research, think-tanks are able to ‘fill the void’ that allow policy-makers to make informed, empirically-substantiated policy decisions in a reasonable timeframe (Wiarda 2008, 97). Thus, one of the main benefits for think-tanks producing policy-relevant publications is the ability to respond to the low supply, and concomitant high demand, by policy-makers for timely,

policy-focused research. In an ideal situation (for both policy-makers and their constituents), policy-makers would have an uninhibited period of time to focus exclusively on a given relevant policy area with access to a complete library of research on the history and implications of each policy area. Of course, in the reality of contemporary American policy-making, this is simply not the case. Instead, policy-makers are constantly juggling multiple tasks and priorities in Washington and amongst their constituents, rendering the aforementioned ideal ‘intellectual digestion’ period an impossibility. This, of course, is where American think-tanks are once again able to assert their utility to policy-makers. By rejecting the notion of providing a definitive, robust interpretation of a given policy area, think-tanks focus on providing policy-makers with condensed, brief research and analysis that provides the most relevant and critical information, with an economy of writing. Accordingly, notwithstanding the critical importance of ‘policy briefs’ in providing policy-relevant research, they are “more important for policy-makers and their busy staff, [as] they can be read and summarized in a matter of minutes, not hours or days” (Abelson 2006, 151). Compared to the time that would be demanded by monographs and lengthy scholarly publications, think-tanks focus on providing policy-makers with timely, digestible research on time-sensitive policy areas.

The second principal means by which American think-tanks seek to exert informal influence is through the organization and facilitation of policy-themed forums, conferences, seminars, and, by extension, any activity in which policy-makers, civil society actors, and even the broader public are gathered together under the auspices of a think-tank. Unlike academic conferences, in which scholars with a wide variety of research interests are gathered in a (typically) multi-day engagement with an overarching, loose research ‘theme,’ the conferences and seminars organized by American think-tanks tend to be more targeted, focused, and acerbic

in their mandate and execution (Wiarda 2000, 98). Typically, conferences and seminars will be organized around the appearance of a particularly notable speaker (often from the policy-making community, past or present), or even to market the publication of recent reports and analyses from the think-tank (Abelson 2009, 78). The ultimate goal of these conferences for think-tanks is simple: to increase the visibility of the think-tank and to bring greater attention to the issues they hope to showcase to the public and to other key stakeholders. There are three principal ways through which American think-tanks benefit in heightened visibility through their hosting of conferences/seminars/forums for discussion and debate.

First, think-tanks can increase their visibility by organizing these conferences around policy debates that are particularly salient among policy-makers and the broader public at the given time. While academic conferences might be more receptive to scholars seeking a more historical, counterfactual, or theoretical accounting of various policy issues, think-tanks use conferences as an opportunity to engage speakers and the public with the most pressing public policy issues of the time. Thus, by centering events on the salient policy issues facing policy-makers, think-tanks can capture the attention of policy-makers, the public, and, importantly, the media, altogether increasing the visibility of these organizations. As Ricci suggests, “such networks, deliberately cultivated by institutes when they organize conferences, symposia, and luncheon meetings around specific topics, bring fellows into contact with reporters, bureaucrats, congressional staff, lobbyists, consultants, lawyers, educators, and other interested parties around Washington” (Ricci 1993, 165). By encouraging and facilitating this interaction, and “as participants become acquainted with other people in their networks over time, the credibility of individual think-tanks can come into play” (Ricci 1993, 165).

Second, think-tanks can increase their visibility through conferences by attracting some of the most prominent, visible individuals engaged with policy-making, actively or in the past. With high-profile speakers comes the name-recognition and professional association that assists think-tanks in both marketing events and attracting attention and interest on the basis of this name-recognition. Finally, think-tanks use conferences as a visibility-raising medium through the engagement of the broader public, either physically at these events or, in increasing popularity to think-tanks contemporarily, recordings or reviews of these events through think-tanks websites or other online avenues. As Abelson suggests, “think tanks take advantage of these opportunities to educate those in attendance about the role of their institute and the work in which they are engaged” (Abelson 2006, 148). By engaging with the broader public, think-tanks not only increase their visibility among individuals, but they also generate new opportunities to identify and target potential donors for these organizations. Though American think-tanks are well-known for attracting large endowments from wealthy benefactors, modest individual donations serve as an important source of funding for many of these organizations. Thus, through the hosting and organization of policy-relevant conferences, American think-tanks are able to increase their visibility by demonstrating their policy relevance, attracting well-known speakers, and engaging directly with the public.

The final means of American think-tanks’ informal influence that this study will consider involves the relationship between many American think-tanks and the media, broadly understood. In many ways, the relationship between American think-tanks and the media permeates through many of the aforementioned activities and functions of think-tanks. However, in light of the critical importance this relationship represents for think-tanks, this relationship is certainly worth exploring independent of the other think-tank activities. As has become

emblematic of this study's analysis of American think-tanks, the landscape within which these many organizations exist and function is increasingly crowded and, by extension, competitive. It is no longer the case that the American think-tank landscape is defined by few actors with the sole intention of providing objective policy-relevant research to interested policy actors. Instead, political advocacy has become a salient aim of many of these organizations, and to be able to effectively advocate in the political system, think-tanks must necessarily be 'heard.' As such, American think-tanks view the media as a critically important medium of dissemination, debate, and analysis over the policy areas in which they are active. Whether it is radio, television, online, or other avenues of popular media expression, think-tanks actively seek to develop relationships with the actors who are responsible for determining which voices are invited (and, importantly, invited back) to provide an interpretation of a given topic. While it seems self-evident that American think-tanks benefit enormously from their interaction with the popular media and news-media, this study will now identify some of the more salient benefits think-tanks reap from this interaction. In particular, there are four principal benefits American think-tanks derive from pursuing a heightened media exposure.

First, engaging with the popular media allows American think-tanks to reach a much wider audience in a condensed period of time. The visibility that an American think-tank can earn from interviews, debates, and presenting research through popular media sources is unparalleled, at least compared to other forms of dissemination. By reaching a large number of individuals, oftentimes in a short period of time, think-tanks are able to expose a wide demographic to their research output and interpretation on a given policy area, not to mention the entrenchment of the given think-tank's name (and possibly specific scholar) in the minds of a wider constituency. As previously mentioned, American think-tanks do not seek to engage with

the wider public solely for educational or otherwise altruistic purposes. Once again, exposing individuals to the mandates and perspectives of think-tanks encourages like-minded individuals to continue to follow the activities of the think-tank, perhaps even contributing to the budgets of these organizations. Thus, American think-tanks have a clear incentive to engage with the popular media to facilitate their exposure and marketing to an ever-widening target audience. The second benefit think-tanks extract from their engagement with the media rests in bolstering the think-tank's credibility within policy-making circles and among the wider public (McDonald 2014, 871). With an ever-expanding rolodex of policy experts, pundits, and commentators, the decision of a media outlet to solicit commentary from a specific think-tank (or scholar thereof) serves as a testament to the perceived expertise of the given think-tank and the trust an ostensibly impartial media outlet might possess for that organization. Further, think-tanks themselves are able to use media appearances and citations as a demonstration of the trust and repute of their organization within the media, particularly in the case of repeated appearances and references.

In addition to reaching a wide audience and providing the impression of credibility, American think-tanks with media appearances are also able to create an illusion of influence. By becoming part of the media landscape in the US, think-tanks are able to use their commentary on topical policy events/issues as an affirmation of their status of being 'in the action.' While it may be the case that policy-makers listen attentively to the contribution of think-tanks among the media, commenting and debating on policy issues demonstrates to the broader public that a given think-tank is intimately familiar with the nature of the policy area and further suggests that their prescriptions are being heard loud and clear. Further, making their cases, analysis, and prescriptions before such a large audience allows think-tanks to market themselves as actively comprising part of the policy debate (Abelson 2000, 224). The fourth benefit that interaction

with the media provides to American think-tanks surrounds the ability of these organizations to have their say in shaping the parameters of debate over a given policy area. Media outlets often turn to American think-tanks to identify the key fault-lines over a given policy issue/debate and provide the context within which these debates are taking place. In contextualizing policy debates and simplifying what might be a confusing policy-making process, think-tanks are able to project their particular empirical and normative boundaries into the discussion. In other words, American think-tanks are often able to assert what they believe to be the ‘threshold for relevance’ in a particular policy debate, naturally leading the discussion into the areas in which the given think-tanks specializes or sees as befitting its ideological persuasion. While this is a particularly difficult assertion to quantify, and it is not easy to discern whether think-tanks are successful in shaping the parameters of the policy debate, it is nevertheless a prerogative many American think-tanks embrace and seek to perpetuate in their interaction with the American media.

3.5 – Who is paying for American think-tanks?

While there is considerable differentiation among American think-tanks from a variety of angles, perhaps the most marked divergence among these organizations can be found in their budgets. As Abelson and Lindquist note, “as diverse as the think tank population is in North America, so too, are the sources of funding from which it draws” (Abelson and Lindquist 2000, 51). Of course, like any other civil society organization, think-tanks rely on and require funding for their day-to-day operation. Yet, through just a cursory glance at the varying budgets of American think-tanks, it is clear that some think-tanks are able to operate with a comparatively smaller budget, while other think-tanks enjoy robust and consistent funding and endowments that affords them considerable long-term financial discretion. Notwithstanding the clear

differentiation among think-tanks' budgets, the connection between a given think-tank's budget and its concomitant success or influence is not particularly clear. While the most visible and ostensibly influential think-tanks in the US enjoy robust balance sheets, it is unclear whether these organizations are financially privileged *because* of their intellectual and scholastic influence, or whether they have attained their intellectual and scholastic influence *because* of their 'deep pockets' from their genesis. However, it is not necessarily the case that the visibility of a given think-tank is wholly predicated on its ability to secure and compound its financial resources. For example, the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), during its relatively brief existence, relied on an annual budget of \$600,000 to fulfill its mandate—by comparison to the most visible American think-tanks, a paltry financial existence (Abelson 2006, 93). Yet, while PNAC has been touted as laying the intellectual foundation for what ultimately became known as the 'Bush Doctrine' following the September 11 terrorist attacks, several scholars have suggested that the actual influence of PNAC on the Bush administration has been greatly exaggerated (Hammond 2007, 72).

With the exception of the RAND Corporation and the Urban Institute, which receive the majority of their funding from various departments of the American government (RAND Corporation 2015, 45; Urban Institute 2014, 1), most of the wealthiest American think-tanks were created through a large initial endowment from its founder(s) and, oftentimes, namesake. Think-tanks benefitting from such sizable endowments include the Brookings Institution, Hoover Institution, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and the Russell Sage Foundation (Abelson and Lindquist 2000, 51), and the Heritage Foundation. Beyond the founding monetary contributions many think-tanks have received, there are various sources of funding which these

organizations use to sustain their day-to-day operations. Of these sources of funding, there are two general categories under which think-tanks' benefactors fall: individual and organizational.

Of these two categories, the organizational donors are typically responsible for fulfilling the majority of think-tanks' annualized budgets, yet individual-level donations not only contribute to the operating expenses of think-tanks, but can also be seen as symbolizing a broader grass-roots appeal. From an organizational perspective, corporations, trade associations, philanthropic organizations, and other private and civil society groups frequently make financial contributions to think-tanks. As Wiedenbaum observes, "it is accurate to say that corporations and foundations affiliated with companies are important providers of funds for the major Washington think tanks" (Weidenbaum 2009, 67). At the individual level, contributions are typically considerably less sizable than those of organizational benefactors. However, individual donors can serve as an important source of revenue for think-tanks, in part because of the recurrent nature of many of these individual donors. In their fundraising appeals to individual donors, American think-tanks actively 'encourage' individual donations to be made on a recurrent basis as opposed to a one-time contribution. Many American think-tanks now offer the opportunity for funders to bequeath portions of their estate to a given think-tank, for example. This effectively serves two purposes. First, it allows for increased predictability in these organizations' financial planning and budgeting. By having an indication of what an organization's budget will look like year-to-year, it becomes possible to allocate resources appropriately and efficiently. Second, in addition to ensuring a consistent financial engagement with individual donors, American think-tanks are also able to use this financial relationship to engage with individuals in the context of the work of the organization. In other words, fostering a relationship with individual donors also allows think-tanks to keep these individuals apprised of

the ‘output’ of these organizations, thereby allowing think-tanks to market their message and demonstrating to donors that their contributions are leading to an effective output from these organizations—effectively, donors are looking for a ‘return on investment.’ Ricci hinted at this connection when, in referencing the Heritage Foundation’s strategy of direct mail campaigns to prospective individual donors, it was suggested that “direct mail not only produces contributions but also generates important marketing effects” (Ricci 1993, 171).

The balance between individual and organizational donors is not consistent across all American think-tanks, nor is it the case that all think-tanks place the same emphasis on fundraising in their day-to-day operations. Further, it is not the case that all donors are looking for the same ‘return on investment’ nor are they making contributions on the basis of the same rationale. For example, some donors might be drawn to a particular think-tank on the basis of its leadership. This led *The Economist* to suggest that, as former senator Jim DeMint vacated his seat and assumed leadership of the Heritage Foundation in 2012, “Mr DeMint, a favourite of the tea-party movement, will lead to a fund-raising bonanza. There is a clear sense in which that is very good for Heritage” (*The Economist*, “Heritage DeMinted,” 2012). However, it is the case that American think-tanks require engagement from public and private actors and organizations to provide the financial stability that allows them to pursue their mandates without a paralyzing preoccupation over financial insecurity.

3.6 – Conclusion

The purpose of the preceding analysis has been to identify and analyze some of the dominant features of the American think-tank landscape, with reference to both the organizations themselves and the broader institutional context within which they operate. Beginning with a consideration of the particular institutional arrangement American think-tanks find themselves

functioning within, it was demonstrated that the two principles of the separation of powers and weak party loyalty (at least in terms of ‘toeing the line’) among decision-makers affords American think-tanks multiple opportunities and avenues to engage with the policy-making process and its actors. After identifying how American think-tanks are generally encouraged by the particular layout of the American political system and institutional arrangement, it was then examined how think-tanks conceptualize and fulfill their roles. In particular, it became clear that American think-tanks have, as their two overarching objectives, the desire to impact the policy-making process and regulating the broader public debate/narrative on these policy areas. In terms of formal engagement, it became clear that think-tanks pursue formal influence through direct testimony before official bodies, most notably Congressional committees and sub-committees, and interaction of policy-makers through the ‘revolving door’ phenomenon. In seeking informal influence—clearly the more accessible and popularly employed method among American think-tanks—of particular salience were the dissemination of internal research, the organization of fora for elite and broader public interaction, and carefully cultivated relationships with the popular media.

After considering what think-tanks seek to do and how they do it, it was then briefly overviewed how think-tanks support themselves, from a financial perspective. While many of the most prominent and visible think-tanks are enriched by the generosity of a small group of wealthy benefactors, past and present, many think-tanks sustain their operations through consistent fundraising and solicitations of donations from individuals and organizations, with emphasis placed on the recurrent nature of many of these funders. Thus, this chapter identified how American think-tanks view their *raison d’être*, how they attempt to fulfill their goals, and how they support these efforts. What remains uncertain, however, is how well American think-

tanks fulfill these mandates and how these organizations (and others) gauge their efficacy in doing so, and what metrics they rely on. The succeeding chapter will identify and analyze the principal means and standards against which American think-tanks and other stakeholders assess their success.

CHAPTER 4: HOW DO AMERICAN THINK-TANKS GAUGE THEIR SUCCESS?

4.1 – Introduction

While the previous analysis identified, among other things, the major roles and goals of American think-tanks, little attention was given to how successfully these organizations actually fulfill their *raison d'être*. In the context of American think-tanks' goals, then, this study has yet to deduce how well these organizations fare in impacting policy-making outcomes and the broader public policy narrative, and the standards against which these macro-level goals are arbitrated by both the organizations themselves and other stakeholders. Though think-tanks do not possess institutional or constitutional 'power' (in the American context, at least), this has not empirically hindered or dissuaded these organizations from seeking to have their voices heard by policy-makers and the broader public. While not presented with the ability to formally vote a certain way on a particular piece of legislation, for example, think-tanks are consequently interested in impacting how actors with these formal competences and prerogatives do vote, as well as how the broader public perceives the parameters of debate on a given policy. It is through this process, which is to say the pursuit of 'influence,' that think-tanks exercise their impact in making their voices heard.

The purpose of this chapter, then, is to identify the principal means by which scholars and think-tanks themselves have metricized and gauged their efficacy. Further, it is also prudent to consider some of the methodological and ontological weaknesses that might be over or under-exaggerating the actual impact of these organizations within the policy and public landscape. By the end, it will be demonstrated how American think-tanks have leveraged their most visible means of engagement with the policy-making and broader public community as a demonstration of their 'influence,' largely for the subsequent purposes of marketing and promoting their case

for funding from individuals and organizations. By being able to tangibly identify the presence of their organization within the policy-making community and the public policy narratives (or at least providing the impression thereof), think-tanks are able to provide their boards of directors and donors with highly visible demonstrations of their relevance and thereby create an illusion of influence. While the means of influence think-tanks have relied on may not necessarily be the best indication of their '*actual*' influence or impact in the policy-making community, these organizations have nevertheless sought to highlight their activities that are most eye-catching and impressive to current and prospective donors. The consequences of this steadfast pursuit of these highly visible and tangible modes of influence will also be considered more fully, including a consideration of the causes and effects of this motif.

This chapter will proceed in three principal stages. First, it is necessary to begin by recognizing the main methodological difficulties scholars and observers of think-tanks have faced in identifying and analyzing the 'influence' of these organizations. Here, the various approaches scholars have taken to gauge the influence of think-tanks will be discerned, along with the principal benefits and drawbacks of the various approaches to studying think-tank 'influence.' Then, it will be identified and analyzed how American think-tanks have traditionally defined their benchmarks of success, and what metrics have been particularly popular in constructing the impression of influence. Again, American think-tanks' approach to defining their own success will be identified from both qualitative and quantitative approaches, with the latter being the most salient to these organizations in the contemporary American think-tank environment. Namely, the imperatives of fundraising and attracting donors has spurred the quantification of think-tank 'success.' Finally, it will be discussed and contemplated why the think-tank environment has come to be dominated by quantitative benchmarks of success and

‘influence,’ considering factors both within think-tanks themselves as well as, and increasingly importantly, external forces. Ultimately, it will be demonstrated that the rapid proliferation of think-tanks and the increased ‘capturing’ of the ideological spectrum, and the concomitant demands this has placed on think-tank leadership to differentiate their organizations, has spurred the demand for the quantification of think-tank ‘influence.’

4.2 – A Difficult Relationship: Think-Tanks and ‘Influence’

For scholars analyzing the roles, goals, and outputs of think-tanks—within the American context and beyond—the concept of influence as a metric for gauging think-tank success has evaded consensus and, to a large degree, been overlooked (deliberately, or otherwise) by the analyses of many of these scholars (Arin 2014, 24). Yet, pundits and commentators frequently (though, most oftentimes, unknowingly) exemplify the danger of over-exaggeration and conflating correlation and causation of think-tank influence—the logic goes that a think-tank’s publication of a policy recommendation and subsequent adoption thereof by policy-makers must imply a causative relationship. Scholars focusing on think-tanks have generally suffered the opposite problem: an inadequate contemplation of the sources and benchmarks of influence of these organizations.

As Abelson notes, demonstratively, “while it is not surprising that think tanks exaggerate their impact in policy making, it is surprising that few journals, or scholars for that matter, have considered whether the increased media visibility of policy institutes is indicative of how relevant or active they are” (Abelson 2009, 92). Rich, for example, altogether rejects the proliferation of both the number and visibility of think-tanks as an indication of their increased policy relevance or influence; instead, “in their growing numbers and increased activism, there is little indication that the overall impact of think tanks as sources of expertise is expanding” (Rich

2004, 204). Rich's opposition notwithstanding, this dearth of scholarly attention to the 'influence' of think-tanks should not necessarily be seen as a condemnation of the utility of devoting attention to this aspect of their operation. Instead, this notable absence from think-tank literature should rather be seen as a testament to the difficulties scholars have faced in ingratiating methodologically rigorous and genuine considerations of influence into the academic study of these organizations; as McGann suggests, "research (case studies) and data on causality is difficult to attain" (McGann 2007, 44). Abelson even suggests that attempting to reach a consensus on gauging think-tank 'influence' is elusive and, therefore,

rather than trying to state categorically that, on the basis of a handful of indicators, some think tanks are more influential than others, scholars should determine whether, when and under what conditions think tanks can contribute and have contributed to specific public policy discussions and to the broader policy-making environment (Abelson 2004, 230).

Even among the scholars who have attempted to define, identify, and compare the 'influence' of think-tanks, there is little evidence of agreement on the appropriate methodology (or methodologies). As has become a popular binary within political science and, further, social science methodological debates, qualitative and quantitative approaches have been embraced by scholars in pinpointing the loci of think-tank influence, from a theoretical, definitional, and empirical standpoint. However, depending on the adoption of either a quantitative or qualitative approach to these organizations' influence, one's choice of method might yield wildly varying conclusions from another's. Such different conclusions, however, might be expected. Whereas a quantitative approach to think-tank 'influence' focuses on the level of engagement of think-tanks with the major targets of their outputs/activities, a qualitative approach is more suitable to providing analysis of the context of think-tank activity and 'success.' It is now prudent to consider how scholars have employed quantitative and qualitative approaches in the study of

think-tanks and ‘influence,’ and how these approaches might elicit divergent conclusions on this subject.

For scholars adopting a quantitative approach in their analysis of think-tanks’ influence, the emphasis is on employing variables that can be assigned a numerical value and can therefore become conducive to rank-ordering or other quantitative-based comparisons. For quantitative analyses of think-tanks’ influence, scholars typically focus on the same quantitative benchmarks that think-tanks themselves are keen to market to the public, their leadership, and prospective/current donors. Variables such as the frequency of congressional testimony and media citations lend themselves particularly well to quantification, so scholars have tended to focus largely on these two variables in quantitative analyses of think-tank influence. Particularly, though, there is one quantifiable aspect of think-tank behaviour that is near-ubiquitously employed: media citations.

With the advancement of technology to facilitate the identification and tracking of media references, it has become possible for scholars to trace which think-tanks are being cited by which media outlets, how frequently they are doing so, and how think-tanks’ media interaction has changed over time. For example, in several of his contributions to the scholarship on think-tanks in both the US and Canada, Abelson has utilized the media profile of think-tanks as an example of one means by which the influence of think-tank could be reasonably assessed. Such media indicators Abelson employed include, among many other variables, the citations of think-tank studies in print media, think-tank references on major evening newscasts, and total television exposure, further broken down by particular issue areas (Abelson 2006; Abelson 2009). While Abelson takes particular care to remind readers that a heightened media profile does not necessarily translate into tantamount rankings of influence among think-tanks, given the

extent to which think-tanks prioritize their media exposure and the increased emphasis on quantifiable demonstrations of their output, it is nevertheless difficult to suggest that media metrics are irrelevant to American think-tanks' influence or the study thereof. However, "data on media citations may tell us which institutes are effective at making the news," though "such information tells us little about whether their views have helped shape, reinforce, clarify or change the minds of policy-makers and the public" (Abelson 2004, 229). Thus, when adopting a quantitative-driven approach to gauging the influence of think-tanks, scholars have naturally focused on the outputs and activities of think-tanks which lend themselves best for quantification, such as the number of congressional testimonies and the frequency of appearance in the media, particularly mainstream print, radio, and television. While some scholars have embraced a quantitative element to their analyses of think-tanks and the methodologically nebulous concept of 'influence,' the majority of scholars writing on think-tanks have opted for a more qualitative approach to inform the bulk of their analysis, which will now be expanded upon.

To be clear, scholars employing a quantitative approach to the study of think-tanks do not do so in an exclusive manner. In other words, scholars using a quantitative methodology for the study of think-tank influence generally do so in a supplementary fashion, with the qualitative aspect of their analysis serving as the principal methodological framework. This is not a reflection of the limited utility or efficacy of quantitative methods to study think-tanks and influence, but rather a demonstration of the limited utility of approaching the study of think-tanks through an exclusively quantitative methodological framework. In embracing a qualitative approach to the study of think-tanks and influence, think-tank scholars typically analyze the involvement of think-tanks in particular pieces of legislation or policy-making processes. These

analyses typically include a deconstruction of the life-cycle of a particular policy debate or process to deduce which actors and/or organizations were being heard the loudest by policy-makers and other stakeholders (namely, the media). By focusing on a singular piece of legislation or event, scholars are able to deeply interrogate the involvement of specific think-tanks in policy-making processes and the potential impact these organizations might have exercised. A quintessential demonstration of the qualitative approach to analyzing think-tanks and ‘influence’ can be found in Andrew Rich’s 2004 consideration of American think-tank influence in three main federal policy areas. Rich’s methodology in doing so proceeds along a “case-by-case narrative of the activities of think tanks in each policy area from the start of the debate to final enactment,” based upon “original archival research and journalistic records from each period and 135 in-depth interviews conducted with personnel from think tanks, interest groups, the media, Congress, and the executive branch” (Rich 2004, 156). Rich’s analysis and methodology embraces a holistic, deep analysis of particular policy processes and think-tank involvement therein (as described from various different stakeholders), exemplifying a quintessentially qualitative approach to the study of think-tank influence.

In utilizing these single-case analyses of think-tanks as potential evidence of influence, however, it is particularly enticing, though dangerous, for scholars to overreach in their assertions of ‘influence.’ As Abelson suggests, “rather than discussing how different methodological approaches can be used to study think tank influence, journalists and scholars have for the most part been content to make sweeping and often unfounded observations about their policy impact” (Abelson 2006, 163). While it may seem feasible to suggest that the synchronization of a think-tank’s proposal with a similar legislative outcome is a demonstration of think-tank influence, it is methodologically disingenuous to make such bold inferences.

According to the president of a think-tank, “when something, say a policy, changes, it is difficult verging on dishonest to attribute the change to the work of a single person or organization, much less a scholarly article” (de Boer 2015, 527). Here, causation and correlation are often misappropriated. Though it may be the case that a policy outcome is impacted by the activity and output of a given think-tank, one must also consider the plethora of other civil society actors—and think-tanks, for that matter—who share, and advocate on behalf of, the same policy desire, among multiple other variables in policy-making. Further, the involvement of think-tanks and particular pieces of policy or legislation is oftentimes difficult to frame within a neatly-bound temporal period. As Rich suggests, “the work of think tanks and policy experts generally can be important to an issue beginning years before it becomes a subject to debate among policy makers, and that importance can continue right through to the period when a new policy is implemented” (Rich 2004, 153). Accordingly, while it is tempting to conceive of think-tank ‘influence’ as a bilateral causative process whereby ‘A’ leads to ‘B’ in the immediate period of debate and legislation of a particular policy, “in reality, a more holistic approach may be required to comprehend how policy influence is achieved” (Abelson 2006, 164). The Heritage Foundation’s Edwin Feulner echoes this dilemma from his position ‘on the ground’: “when the different ingredients go into the political meat grinder and the legislative sausage comes out, how do we know which pieces of it are ours? We often cannot answer with precision” (Feulner 2000, 77). Despite the methodological difficulties associated with inferring ostensible causative influence on the basis of actual correlation, in-depth qualitative approaches to think-tank influence allows scholars to provide a deep analysis of a given legislative event or process and think-tanks’ interaction therein. Ultimately, the case can be built—however ontologically indefinite—that there is the presence or absence of policy influence.

To be sure, think-tank scholars are not the only academics who have faced methodological and ontological difficulties when injecting considerations of influence into their analyses. Scholars working in the broad area of ‘interest representation’ are equally as interested as think-tank scholars in gauging the extent to which certain organizations (from lobby groups and corporations to NGOs and social movements) are able to exert an impact on the policy-making process and outcomes, however demonstrable. For Rich, scholars and practitioners focusing on civil society organizations besides think-tanks have an even larger investment in gauging and marketing ‘influence’: “commentary from think tanks, even when it is well packaged, well marketed, and well received, serves as little match for the commentary and contributions of interest groups and others who are heavily invested in the outcomes of legislative debates” (Rich 2004, 215). As a final condemnation of think-tank efficacy in garnering influence, and the utility of the academic study thereof, Rich adds

in the competition between interest groups and think tanks to make views influential at latter stages of policy debates, interest groups almost always win out,” suggesting that “think tanks have not achieved the substantive influence in U.S. policy making that their increased numbers might suggest they could (Rich 2004, 215).

On the other hand, scholars like James McGann are inclined to afford American think-tanks a higher degree of veritable impact in the policy-making process:

in general, American think tanks have a competitive advantage in the formation of public policy and public opinion because of their access to policymakers and the media, which increases the utilization of their research and analysis by high-level policymakers and the public (McGann 2007, 44).

Again, the modest view of think-tank influence by Rich is further contrasted with the perception of James McGann who, instead of suggesting that the policy impact and ‘influence’ of think-tanks has been overstated, actually suggests “think tanks tend to understate rather than overstate their influence on major policy issues” (McGann 2007, 42). Furthermore, it is also the case that

there is a clear challenge among scholars in separating the influence of advocacy and interest-representing organizations among each other in a given policy area or legislative process. According to Abelson, there is “tremendous difficulty that policymakers, not to mention scholars, encounter in trying to isolate the influence of think tanks from the influence of the multitude of other organizations that have vested interests in influencing policy-making” (Abelson 2009, 111). It is insincere to view the policy-making process and outcomes with consideration of just one type of civil society actor (such as think-tanks), and it is even more difficult to isolate the effect of one particular organization in an arena where there are an incredible number of actors and organizations vying for the attention of policy-makers. As previously mentioned, this inability is a major weakness of pluralist approaches to studying think-tanks, and civil society for that matter. As such, “given the complexities of the legislative process and the number of competing interests in American politics, it is difficult for any one actor to claim sole responsibility for any public policy” (McGann 2007, 44). Once again, Feulner’s ‘meat grinder’ analogy of the difficulty in extrapolating think-tank influence seems to have traction here, where isolating the impact of a single organization is methodologically evasive.

While think-tank scholars can certainly benefit from the advances that have been made by scholars studying ‘influence’ and other civil society actors, it is insufficient to wholly outsource considerations of ‘influence’ to a similar literature on other influence-seeking organizations. While there is certainly a clear theoretical and empirical overlap between think-tanks and other interest-representing organizations and their search for ‘influence,’ think-tanks possess a differentiating trait which does not lend particularly well to the approaches that have been employed in studying most interest-representing organizations.

Specifically, while American think-tanks do direct significant resources to the impacting of the day-to-day policy-making process at the federal level in the US, they are also fundamentally and foundationally invested in advancing an ideological agenda that is not as easily measured by the passage or nullification of a singular piece of legislation. Instead, gauging the success of American think-tanks in shaping the national discourse and regulating national debate on a given area evades the attractive quantification that has become increasingly characteristic in gauging the ‘influence’ of non-state actors. While a single piece of legislation can pass or fail in binary fashion, the fomentation and inculcation of an ideological viewpoint or framework is not as easily discernible or allocated into binary metrics of success or failure; indeed, it is difficult to ascertain, with any reasonable degree of methodological integrity, whether such an ideological or ideational imprint has actually occurred or been altered. As a testament to the ethereal nature of ‘ideological transformation,’ consider the nebulous characterization of think-tank ideological impact advanced by Pautz, who suggests that think-tanks “can contribute to the development of new ‘legitimising discourses’ for certain policies..., and through their integration into policy networks think-tanks can become effective ideological apparatuses and infuse their contributions to the discourse into the debate” (Pautz 2011, 428). From Pautz’s categorization, it seems difficult, if not futile, to operationalize concepts such as a ‘legitimized discourse’ in an accurate and meaningful way. Thus, while quantification might allow scholars to provide an ostensibly objective angle in analyzing the influence of American think-tanks in the short-term policy-making process, assessing the influence of these organizations in their broadest ambition and goals is considerably more difficult, if not impossible, to represent through metrics and quantification. Having identified how scholars have contemplated the nexus of think-tanks and ‘influence,’ consideration will now be given as to

how American think-tanks themselves have benchmarked, evaluated, and contemplated their own ‘influence’ from an internal perspective.

4.3 – How Do Think-Tanks Gauge their Success?

In an increasingly crowded ‘marketplace of ideas,’ think-tanks perpetually seek to differentiate themselves from the rapidly-proliferating community of policy research institutes. If not just for the individual prestige of their organization, think-tanks need to consistently heighten their activities, output, and engagement for the purposes of maintaining and expanding their base of financial contributors and interested parties. Without the ability to cultivate an image of ‘influence,’ think-tanks are less capable of incentivizing individuals and organizations to follow the work of the think-tank and, hopefully, contribute to various fundraising initiatives. This, from this author’s viewpoint, has been an unchanged truism in the think-tank community; donors are not interested in offering their resources to think-tanks which have little interest in utilizing those funds to impact the policy-making process and shape the broader public policy narratives. Thus, demonstrating a track-record of activities and output ostensibly supporting the search for ‘influence’ is crucial to the continued operation of think-tanks. Much like a corporation in a free-market economy, American think-tanks need to demonstrate to their shareholders and stakeholders that their work is worth supporting and provides a demonstrable efficacy and utility to the ‘marketplace of ideas.’

In particular, American think-tanks’ means of demonstrating their influence can be grouped into two categories: quantitative and qualitative. If the annual reports and headline stories on think-tanks’ homepages are any indication, American think-tanks place significant salience on their ability to report quantitative demonstrations of influence, with qualitative accounts of influence playing more of a supplementary role. From a quantitative perspective,

American think-tanks focus overwhelmingly on two principal activities: the volume of congressional testimony and the frequency of their interaction with the media. For example, in AEI's 2014 annual report, the Chairman and President were quick to point out that "AEI scholars continue to lead the Washington policy community in terms of congressional testimonies and op-ed publication in the nation's most prominent newspapers" (AEI 2015, 1). From a qualitative accounting of their own 'influence,' American think-tanks were keen to focus on the prolific speakers they were able to attract, the institutional response of think-tanks to pressing policy issues (i.e. the creation of new 'centers' or sub-institutes), and the ability of think-tanks to create networks of like-minded individuals across the country, from both a policy and public engagement perspective. While the quantitative-qualitative distinction is a helpful means of differentiating modes of influence for think-tanks, terms more familiar to studies of policy-making and civil society can be used instead. For quantitative measures of influence, these measures can be advocated as representing a think-tank's 'credibility' and 'impact,' while qualitative indicators of influence can be used to represent 'relevance' to the contemporary public policy environment. However, not all think-tanks agree on the best means of internally gauging their success, policy impact, or 'influence.' As Edwin Feulner, one of the Heritage Foundation's co-founders, queries "How do you measure impact? We have asked ourselves this question since day one, and we still have no clear answers" (Feulner 2000, 77). Abelson adds a scholarly basis to Feulner's appraisal, suggesting that while

data on each of these [impact-based] indicators may provide insight into the amount of exposure think tanks and their staff generate, it cannot confirm how much or little influence policy institutes have in shaping public opinion and the policy preferences and choices of policy-makers (Abelson 2004, 229).

Even the director of a prominent supranational think-tank has observed, in referencing the use of metrics for evaluating 'influence': "we do measure all of these but in the end they are only

imperfect proxies. For example, a single publication read and implemented by a high level policy maker can be worth more than any number of press appearances” (Fabian Zuleeg, personal communication, April 14, 2016). Nevertheless, American think-tanks are not necessarily interested in contemplating the methodological and ontological bases for the most veritable means of impact; instead, those variables that are most tangible, visible, and marketable are the priority of these organizations in their considerations of ‘influence’ and policy impact. The principal modes of gauging and conveying ‘influence’ will now be considered more fully.

4.3.1 – Quantitative Measures, ‘Credibility,’ and ‘Impact’

American think-tanks primarily use quantitative metrics as affirmations of their perceived ‘influence’ and the concomitant marketing of this influence to donors, policy-makers, and the media. For Rich, the formula is simple: “experts who actively market their research improve its chances of being influential” (Rich 2004, 207), leading to the development of American think-tanks as “sleekly styled marketing machines” (Rich 2004, 208). For example, the Cato Institute proudly declares that its “media and marketing teams work diligently to disseminate Cato’s message across all popular print and online platforms—blogs, op-eds, TV and radio appearances, and social media,” lending to its ability to “advance well-reasoned, objective research and analysis via rapid response channels and events” (Cato Institute 2015, 8). By being able to tangibly represent their activities and outputs, think-tanks are able to quickly dispel any notion that their efforts are being focused on parochial, irrelevant research and avoiding the public policy issues of the day or, perhaps worse, focusing on since-expired or anachronistic policy debates. For example, the President of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), John Hamre, suggests “[at CSIS] we measure ourselves by tangible results. The goal of every project at CSIS is improved policy, not a book” (CSIS 2012, 7). Thus, “efforts to format and

promote expertise to gain immediate visibility and influence have become a regular strategy of more and more think tanks” (Rich 2004, 206). This view is corroborated by Abelson, who suggests “as new generations of think tanks emerged, they realized that developing effective marketing techniques to enhance their status in the policy-making community, rather than providing decision-makers with sound and impartial advice, had to become their main priority” (Abelson 2004, 225).

Further, as think-tanks continue to compete for attention from the media and policy-makers, introducing quantitative representations of these interactions allows for ranking and comparison from one think-tank to another, for example. It is much easier, and more powerful, for a highly visible think-tank to refer to a quantitatively impressive number of citations and interactions with the media than it is to debate the relative qualifications, status, or topicality of a given speaker at think-tanks’ conferences. Similarly, it is more compelling and persuasive for a think-tank to identify the number of times its scholars have testified before congressional committees and sub-committees than it is to simply state that a think-tank’s research has been disseminated willy-nilly to decision-makers. In this case, a targeted approach to receptive or vulnerable policy-makers is seen as a more appropriate strategy than a mass distribution of a report or proposal to a mostly-uninterested audience. Naturally, then, in annual reports and in marketing materials presented to current and prospective donors, American think-tanks highlight their visibility and credibility garnered through testimony before official bodies and their interactions with the media. For instance, in their 2015 annual report, the Brookings Institution concordantly summarizes this study’s identification of the quantitative metrics think-tanks utilize to gauge their influence: “scholars testified before Congress and were interviewed by major news

outlets, providing fact-based analysis to policymakers and the public” (Brookings Institution 2016, 16).

It has become clear throughout this study thus far that American think-tanks have a salient interest in maintaining a strong relationship with the media, mainstream or otherwise. In addition to the prestige that is afforded to the individuals representing a given think-tank through the media, these same individuals, in their disseminating capacity, “can also promote the goals of the institutions the scholars represent” (Abelson 2006, 158). In terms of their interaction with the media, American think-tanks focus on two aspects of this relationship in measuring their purported influence: quantity and quality.

First and foremost, American think-tanks are keen to highlight the amount and frequency of interaction they have with the media, indicating the salience of this number as a testament to the influence and impact of these organizations. Of course, this makes sense for think-tanks; as discussed previously, think-tanks benefit from the increased visibility and credibility afforded by their interaction with the media in multiple ways. Accordingly, “those [think-tanks] offering expertise more easily find a stage for it when they are viewed as credible by prospective audiences” (Rich 2004, 155). Thus, as a given think-tank increases its media profile through a proliferating number and regularity of appearances, this think-tank is then able to cultivate an impression of credibility and visibility that is often utilized as a chief marketing tool for current and prospective donors. For American think-tanks, then, the sheer volume of interaction with the media is used as a principal benchmark and gauge of their purported influence among policymakers and, importantly here, the broader public. However, it is not necessarily the case that American think-tanks are interested in presenting an image of themselves pursuing a ‘free-for-all’ media strategy whereby any citation or reference by a major national media outlet is

tantamount in value and influence to the same reference by a marginal, unrecognizable media source. In other words, while American think-tanks are keen to develop their media profile in a quantitatively impressive fashion, these organizations are also careful to demonstrate their traction among the most recognizable and reputable media sources—accordingly, ‘quality’ of media interaction is not to be overlooked. For example, in their 2014 Annual Report, the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) claimed

we are not sacrificing quality for quantity...AEI scholars are frequently in the nation’s top newspapers, appearing more than 75 times in 2014 in the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, and Washington Post alone (AEI 2015, 13).

Unlike the numerical indicators of media success—in which the prestige and visibility of a media source are a distant second priority to the fact that they are trumpeting the work of think-tanks—the qualitative aspect of think-tanks’ interaction with the media demonstrates the extent to which the most credible and visible media outlets trust the expertise and rigour of a given think-tank’s research, analysis, and expertise. According to the Hoover Institution,

to ensure that the Institution’s content and research are widely distributed, the Institution cultivates media relationships across the spectrum, including editors at the nation’s largest newspapers, commentators on national and public broadcasting networks, top national radio and television hosts, and journalists active both in print and social media (Hoover Institution 2016, 26).

For American think-tanks, then, media indicators of influence are not centered solely on the quantity of interaction with media outlets, but rather include a consideration of the prestige and credibility of the media organizations they interact with.

The second major quantitative evaluator of influence American think-tanks turn to in representing their influence externally is that of testimony before congressional committees and sub-committees. Engaging with policy-makers is of utmost importance to fulfilling American think-tanks’ dualistic goals of impacting policy-making as well as shaping broader public policy

narratives. According to the Heritage Foundation, “Congress remains the principal ‘target audience’ for Heritage policy proposals” (Heritage 2015, 3). Andrew Rich, in corroborating the congress-heavy focus of the Heritage Foundation, recalls how Heritage’s founders were dismayed by the intentional delaying of the publication of a policy brief by AEI, out of a desire *not* to influence a relevant vote in the Senate. In turn, the founders’ “frustration fueled efforts to form the Heritage Foundation, which from its beginning made informing congressional decision making central to its mission” (Rich 2004, 152). In many ways, the Heritage Foundation can be seen as a fulcrum in the shift of think-tanks towards a more advocacy-based agenda; as Medvetz suggests, the Heritage Foundation and other similarly-oriented think-tanks “produced studies for built-in audiences of activists, hired staff members with political rather than academic credentials, and raised money from politically interested donors” (Medvetz 2007, 23). Ultimately, from Medvetz’s critical, sociological-based vantage point, “there was a plain shift in the form of their intellectual production toward work tailored to the practical demands of politicians and journalists” (Medvetz 2007, 25), as opposed to the academic-style, original research agenda that preceded this epoch. According to the Hoover Institution, for example, “although our scholars engage in research that is specialized, deep, and detailed, the objectives are pragmatic and apply to the most pressing issues of the day” (Hoover Institution 2016, 8). Here, in their testimony before congressional committees and sub-committees, American think-tanks demonstrate a propensity to favoring quantity over ‘quality,’ though, in the case of testimony before decision-makers, it is difficult to rank-order levels of ‘quality’ in this context. Typically, many think-tanks’ annual reports will include a highly-visible, eye-catching ‘by-the-numbers’ section where key quantitative indicators are presented; inevitably, testimonies before congressional committees and sub-committees are featured extremely prominently and visibly.

Evidence of testimony before congressional bodies allows the public, media, and policy-making community to reasonably infer that a given think-tank possesses in-demand expertise on topics of pressing concern to public policy. Thus, American think-tanks are keen to prominently advertise and feature their congressional testimony in marketing materials and their annual reports.

As suggested, American think-tanks utilize quantitative indicators of influence to demonstrate their credibility as organizations capable of producing and disseminating policy-relevant research and analysis to critical stakeholders in the policy arena. By being able to tangibly represent their activities, output, and extent to which they are ‘listened to’ through numerical values, American think-tanks are able to cultivate their image of credibility and success to external individuals and organizations while simultaneously providing a basis for comparison between themselves. In addition to metricizing their successes from a quantitative perspective, American think-tanks are also interested in promoting other benchmarks of ‘influence’ that do not necessarily lend well to quantification, and are therefore identified as ‘qualitative’ measures of influence. These qualitative indicators will now be considered more fully.

4.3.2 – Qualitative Measures and ‘Relevance’

Though think-tanks have increasingly come to embrace quantitative standards and benchmarks to represent their purported influence in the American policy-making community and public policy debate, this is not to suggest that these organizations are exclusively interested in promoting quantitative indicators in their marketing efforts. It is the case, though, that American think-tanks, for the most part, prioritize quantitative affirmations of their activities and output in their own conceptualizations of ‘influence’; again, a brief glance through the annual

report of a given think-tank will quickly substantiate this proclivity. Yet, American think-tanks are also inclined to trumpet their ‘soft,’ qualitative modes of influence which allow these organizations to demonstrate their relevance and currency in imminent and topical public policy issues, and ultimately provide a more rounded image of what these organizations do aside from their media and congressional activity. In particular, focus will be placed on three main ‘soft’ factors which American think-tanks have used to cultivate an image of topicality and centrality to the public policy discussion and narrative.

First, American think-tanks frequently refer to the various panel events and speakers that are invited to participate at think-tank forums through any given year. In annual reports, for example, American think-tanks pictorially present the various high-profile speakers that have, in some form, been associated with the respective think-tank in a given year. In particular, think-tanks are evidently interested in touting their ability to engage current policy-makers in their various initiatives beyond testimony before congressional committees, typically in the form of invited speeches or debate under the aegis of the respective think-tank. Again, if annual reports are any indication, American think-tanks prioritize the marketing of their ability to host active policy-makers at events centering on pressing policy issues or debates. Hosting active and leading policy-makers at think-tank events demonstrates not just the ability of a think-tank to ‘flex its rolodex,’ but also allows individual policy-makers to provide an indication of how policy-makers are, or plan to be, responding to the pressing policy issues at a given time.

Accordingly, think-tanks themselves are given an indication, from first-hand sources, as to what the ‘climate’ is around policy-makers and the opportunities for think-tanks to fill any research or analytical voids that might exist, at present or in the future. By attracting highly-visible speakers to discuss and debate matters of pressing importance to public policy-making, American think-

tanks are able to demonstrate their interest in covering and analyzing the most relevant issues facing policy-makers, as well as solidifying their credibility and socio-political clout through the hosting of prolific guests.

The second ‘soft’ mode of influence American think-tanks utilize in their marketing is their institutional responsiveness to changing priorities and events, domestically and internationally. Specifically, this institutional responsiveness is manifested in the creation—or, more frequently, the renaming—of new departments or centers/institutes within the think-tank, and the concomitant creation of new fellowships and endowments. By amending the institutional composure of the research areas and departments to reflect the changing domestic and international landscape, American think-tanks are able to demonstrate that they are far from stagnant, unresponsive institutes. This demonstrates, furthermore, that these organizations are not preoccupied with the policy areas they have historically been engaged with, however successful this model might have been in the past. By undergoing institutional changes, American think-tanks are able to demonstrate how “over time the work of think tanks has been driven less by academic disciplinary debates and more by the demands of politicians, bureaucrats, activists, and journalists in the everyday practice of politics” (Medvetz 2007, 407). Demonstrating an institutional fluidity and responsiveness allows think-tanks to assert their recognition and openness to emerging considerations in public policy, ultimately allowing think-tanks to affirm their relevance to contemporary public policy. For example, according to AEI,

AEI has launched a number of research centers to identify and address ongoing threats and unforeseen challenges in the domestic, foreign, and defense policy arenas,” adding that “these centers are helping AEI deepen our research focus on select issues, positioning the Institute to define the terms of debate in Washington (AEI 2015, 8).

It is clear, then, that demonstrating an institutional responsiveness and openness to the most topical public policy issues allows American think-tanks to affirm their relevance to contemporary policy-making and public policy debates.

The final principal means by which American think-tanks employ ‘soft’ modes of influence to demonstrate relevance centers on the ability of the organization to create networks of like-minded individuals, typically around the US (and, in some case, internationally). By engaging individuals and organizations outside of the Washington, DC area (but also, crucially, ‘inside the beltway’), American think-tanks are able to disseminate and evangelize their research and analysis to a wide constituency of individuals committed to the ideological underpinnings of the think-tank. After all, “acting as agents of ideologies rather than as independent analysts, [think tanks] want to fight for a particular vision of public policy, not simply inform policy debates with research” (Rich 2004, 211). Recognizing that a given think-tank in the US will typically be associated with a particular ideological standpoint, individuals and organizations with a similar ideological viewpoint are encouraged to network, follow the research of, and liaise with representatives from the given think-tank and other like-minded individuals/organizations at the local and/or regional level. For example, the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) actively markets its ‘National Program’ which “provides multiple avenues for members who live outside of New York and Washington to connect with CFR and its resources,” manifesting in, among other means, “more than one hundred National meetings...convened in this year in more than a dozen cities” (Council on Foreign Relations 2016, 14). American think-tanks are particularly keen to highlight the growth of their non-Washington networks, thereby demonstrating wide-reaching recognition and support beyond the center of federal institutional power in the US. Because think-tanks are, as part of their principal purposes, invested in expanding their network

of donors and subscribers, demonstrating a proliferating network of individuals/organizations serves as a testament to think-tanks' increasing clout, relevance, and reach beyond their primary demographic. Through an expanding network of individuals and organizations, think-tanks are not just able to deduce that their ideological message is being received and embraced widely, but that they are also exposed to new sources of potential donors to ensure the further expansion of their networks. Thus, for the purposes of expanding the ideological reach and developing new sources of donors, American think-tanks actively tout their expanded circles and networks of like-minded individuals and organizations.

Thus far, it has been demonstrated how American think-tanks have, themselves, sought to gauge their own 'influence' in the policy-making community and the broader public policy narratives/debates. In particular, it was demonstrated that think-tanks have employed both quantitative and qualitative indicators of 'influence,' with a marked emphasis on the former and the latter playing more of a supplementary role in their marketing efforts. From a quantitative perspective, which has been associated with validating a given think-tank's 'credibility,' American think-tanks very clearly focused on two principal quantifiable indicators: the extent of their interaction with the media and the frequency of testimony before congressional committees and sub-committees. These two aspects of American think-tank activity have unequivocally become the central 'selling point' of think-tanks themselves, as evidenced throughout their marketing-related publications and webpages. While media and congressional interaction are the two principal benchmarks of 'influence' in the contemporary think-tank landscape, this is not to say that other activities and outputs of think-tanks are unrepresented. Instead, American think-tanks utilize what has thus far been referred to as 'soft' factors of influence, through which these organizations are able to cultivate an image of relevance, warranted or otherwise. Namely, the

calibre of their visiting speakers, the institutional response to changing public policy priorities, and the expansion of their individual and organizational networks (nationally and internationally) were identified as the primary means through which think-tanks demonstrate their ‘soft’ influence and, as suggested, relevance to contemporary public policy-making.

4.3.3 – Why the Push to Quantification?

Though it is clear that American think-tanks are inclined to tout their qualitative indicators of ‘influence,’ the previous section clearly demonstrated that quantitative indicators of influence are the most internally valuable and marketable from the perspective of these organizations. With an increasing number of actors seeking funding from, generally speaking, the same types of actors and organizations, the storyline follows that think-tanks need to develop metrics and benchmarks to differentiate their output and activities from their peers in the American think-tank community.

According to James A. Smith, and his ‘marketplace of ideas’ metaphor, “marketing and promotion have done more to change the think tanks’ definition of their role (and the public’s perception of them) than has any other phenomenon” (Smith 1991, 194), adding that “the market metaphor...now holds sway among institutions across the political spectrum, all of which feel increasingly crowded by competition for public attention and funding” (Smith 1991, 200). Thus, in an ever-crowding ‘marketplace of ideas,’ American think-tanks necessarily need to differentiate themselves from their counterparts, and need to be able to demonstrate this differentiation tangibly and objectively. Rich identifies this marketing-heavy trend by observing that think-tanks “and experts are more influential when they effectively market their work so that it is available and accessible to potentially interested policy makers” (Rich 2004, 155). The assumption, then, is that the most quantitatively impressive think-tanks reap the reward of

greatest visibility and attention from policy-makers and funders, thereby protecting and advancing their financial and operational longevity in the policy-making and public policy community. Notwithstanding the impressive list of speakers and expanded networks of supporters many think-tanks have cultivated, it appears to be the case that a congressional testimony or the appearance of a scholar on a marquis Sunday morning political show can trump even the most robust qualitative indicators of influence.

While it is not surprising that American think-tanks are eager to highlight the extent to which the media and congressional bodies recognize and are open to the expertise and resources many think-tanks possess, what is surprising is the near-obsession of many of these organizations over the quantitative metrics in their marketing efforts—the Wilson Center, for example, provides such specific data as the rate at which its mass emails are opened by subscribers and the numbers of views of its social media posts generate (Wilson Center 2015, 4). Especially given that many of the most visible American think-tanks pursue a wide set of activities and outputs that do not necessarily lend well to quantification, the question then becomes why these organizations have aggressively pursued quantification-driven influence metrics as the new benchmark of think-tank success in the US. Within the context of this study’s progression from the preceding analysis up to now, it seems clear that the answer to this question rests primarily with the precarity of funding many American think-tanks face. In particular, there appear to be two interrelated principal contributors to the comparatively more disparate funding environment American think-tanks find themselves in, especially compared to previous ‘waves’ of think-tanks. First, contemporary think-tanks face an ever-increasing aggregate number of actors competing for the same resources and, second, the American ideological spectrum has become increasingly captured, saturated, and ‘crowded’ by active think-tanks.

First, as James McGann has documented, the history of American think-tanks has been one of consistent proliferation in number and, until recently, rate; according to McGann, “this proliferation in civil society organizations and think tanks continues up to the present-day” (McGann 2005, 72). Accordingly, simply by virtue of an increased number of think-tanks seeking to impact the policy-making process and shape public discourse, the competition for funding has increased. While it might be difficult to quantify the assertion that there is a finite ‘pool’ of financial resources American think-tanks are able to extract from, it is nevertheless the case that think-tanks generally seek funding from the same individuals and organizations interested in contributing to the work of think-tanks and, more broadly, non-governmental organizations. This funding situation, however, is not markedly different for both established and developing think-tanks. While established think-tanks certainly benefit from a historical track-record of policy-making and public engagement—not to mention a typically sizable founding endowment, though increasingly rare today (Feulner 2000, 73)—few of these established think-tanks desire to remain stagnant and see their visibility fade, along with lost opportunities to protect their financial longevity. Instead, established think-tanks are equally (if not more) adamant in continuing to exacerbate their visibility before policy-makers and the public through the mediums previously discussed. For emerging think-tanks, there is clearly a significant need to develop and safeguard their financial future; the most qualified roster of scholars and impressive research or ideological angle is of little consequence if the given think-tank cannot ensure its financial and operational security for these resources to become, and remain, active. Thus, the increased number of think-tanks in the American think-tank landscape has forced these organizations to be able to clearly and objectively differentiate themselves—the quantification of ‘influence’ is a natural means by which this can occur.

Further, as the number of think-tanks has increased, so too has the coverage of the ideological spectrum by these organizations. As the ideological spectrum has come to be more fully captured by the proliferating American think-tank community, think-tanks need to differentiate themselves not just from their distant ideological counterparts but also, and perhaps even more so, from their ideologically proximate peers—this is especially true, as some scholars have suggested, for right-leaning think-tanks in the US (Miller-Cribbs et al. 2010, 285). With an increasing quantity of think-tanks entering and competing within the American think-tank landscape, it is also the case that this proliferation of organizations has resulted in the concomitant increase in the extent to which the ideological spectrum is represented by think-tanks. In other words, it is not simply the case that the increasing number of American think-tanks has occurred within a particular ideological vacuum; instead, left-leaning, right-leaning, centrist, libertarian, and ideologically polar think-tanks have faced competition from emergent think-tanks within these ideological domains. Think-tanks, therefore, also have to compete within “the more ideologically contentious environment in which they operate” (Rich 2004, 206), compared to previous epochs. Thus, while American think-tanks might seek to become the dominant ‘voice’ representing their particular ideological disposition, the influx of new actors seeking the same ideological hegemony heightens the push for quantitative benchmarks to gauge think-tank ‘salience’ within these ideological echelons.

While it may have once been the case that the American think-tank community was marked by a small number of independent policy research institutes with a handful of scholars, the 21st century think-tank landscape has reduced this epoch to a far-distant caricature. Instead, the contemporary American think-tank environment is distinguished from earlier periods in think-tank activity by the continued proliferation of these organizations in both their absolute

number and ideological range, among a host of other internal and external changes. With this increased number and ideological range of the American think-tank environment, the competition for resources that allow think-tanks to function and thrive has concomitantly increased. Particularly, the competition for funding from corporations, foundations, and other benefactor organizations and individuals has forced American think-tanks to devote considerable attention and resources to the pursuit of these funders' philanthropic budgets. Thus, in recent decades, American think-tanks have seen an increasing importance and resource devotion to marketing and fundraising efforts, not so much out of the desire to increase their revenues year-to-year (though certainly all think-tanks would welcome this outcome), but rather as a means of institutional survival. Thus, the competition for funding, itself a by-product of competition for media air-time and policy-makers' open ears, has forced think-tanks to pursue activities and outputs that most demonstrably allow for differentiation.

It has become clear thus far that American think-tanks have felt pressure to adopt and pursue quantitatively-driven outputs for the purposes of cultivating an image of 'influence' in the policy-making process. This pressure, as demonstrated, has largely emanated from the significant proliferation of think-tanks and their ideological coverage in the American landscape, and the consequent increased competition this has thrust upon the American think-tank community. Yet, this is not the full story. American think-tanks' operational leadership have simultaneously felt increased pressure from think-tank advisory and leadership boards to augment the visibility and, in doing so, improve the case for continued funding and soliciting new donors. To appease these leadership bodies and convince the donor community of think-tank relevance and 'influence,' think-tanks pursue and actively present quantitative metrics that demonstrate the robust activity, output, and perceived influence of these organizations. In doing so, "the attention the work

receives at these moments serves as an organizational maintenance role for think tanks,” as “the attention validates the investments patrons make in a think tank’s work” (Rich 2004, 211).

Abelson succinctly and pointedly summarizes this formula that think-tank leadership has adopted, suggesting “in the minds of think tank directors, who are accountable to boards of trustees and directors, numbers translate into policy influence, and policy influence translates into more funding,” adding that “although some trustees and donors may want to know more about the nature of the research, they are concerned primarily with the range and volume of products think tanks produce” (Abelson 2006, 160) in the ‘marketplace of ideas.’

4.4 – Conclusion

This chapter sought to identify how the concept of ‘influence’ has been ingratiated within the study of think-tanks, from the perspective of think-tanks themselves and those who study them. Particular attention was placed on the shift in attention of scholars and think-tanks themselves to those indicators and variables which are particularly prone to quantification and numerical-based comparison. While think-tank leadership and the scholars working within them may not, from an internal perspective, view the quantity of media citations or congressional testimony as the most salient indicators of ‘success’ or their *raison d’etre*, the contemporary think-tank environment, internal demands, and external forces have nevertheless shifted the basis of ‘influence’ and comparison between think-tanks in an adamantly quantitative direction.

This chapter began by identifying the principal methodological issues that surround the approaches to gauging the influence of think-tanks. Though not as popular as qualitative approaches to analyzing think-tank influence, some scholars have begun to infuse quantitative elements in their analyses, though mostly in a supplementary and demonstrative fashion. In particular, and much like think-tanks themselves, scholars employing a quantitative approach to

think-tank influence tended to focus on those variables which are most conducive to quantification, namely the quantity of testimony before congressional committees and the frequency of citations in the media. However, much of the scholarly analysis on think-tanks and influence has taken place within a qualitative paradigm, whereby single case studies are typically employed to analyze the role and impact of think-tanks within the given policy-making process. While there are certainly merits to providing an in-depth analysis of a specific policy's lifespan and the involvement of specific think-tanks therein, the temptation to misappropriate 'influence' is very high, and scholars need to be able to distinguish between correlation and causation in this approach.

Following an identification and discussion of how scholars have traditionally reconciled the concept of 'influence' with the American think-tank landscape, this chapter proceeded to analyze how American think-tanks, themselves, identify and gauge their 'influence.' In harmony with the scholastic approaches to think-tank influence, it was demonstrated how American think-tanks employ both qualitative and quantitative indicators of influence, with considerable and increasing salience placed upon the latter. From a quantitative standpoint, American think-tanks rely heavily on the volume of their interaction with congressional committees/sub-committees and the frequency of their interaction with the media as their quantitative indicators of success. In terms of qualitative indicators of influence, particular attention was given to American think-tanks' roster of speakers, institutional responsiveness to pressing public policy issues, and the creation of networks across the country (and globe, for that matter). While American think-tanks clearly focus heavily on their quantitative indicators of success in their marketing efforts, qualitative indicators of success are nevertheless given a noteworthy amount of 'air time' within their marketing materials.

After identifying the main measures of ‘influence’ American think-tanks have relied on, especially contemporaneously, this chapter then briefly concluded by asking why American think-tanks have felt the pressure to move their efforts and marketing toward those variables that lend particularly well to quantification (namely through congressional testimony and media interaction). In addition to the pressures faced by think-tanks from their leadership and donors, the changing nature of the American think-tank landscape has been chiefly responsible for spurring the shift toward the quantification of ‘influence.’ Specifically, the increased number of American think-tanks and the fuller ‘capturing’ of the American ideological spectrum has fomented a hyper-competitive, quantitative-driven environment among these organizations. Accordingly, the utility of numerical indicators in facilitating comparison between think-tanks has allowed these organizations to (ostensibly) objectively compare themselves among each other. With the quantification of think-tanks’ activities, donors and leadership can be more tangibly placated, or at the very least can objectively evaluate their respective think-tanks’ performance in a comparative context.

While the American think-tank landscape has come to be defined by a hyper-competitive environment in which numerical indicators of success are the most valuable currency, the think-tank landscape in the European Union provides a vastly different arena in which similar organizations operate. This study will now proceed to consider how supranational think-tanks function within the EU and, as will become particularly interesting in light of the preceding analysis, how they evaluate their success.

CHAPTER 5: THE ROLES AND GOALS OF SUPRANATIONAL THINK-TANKS

5.1 – Introduction

While the previous analysis has largely focused on the roles and outputs of the American think-tank environment, the present and subsequent chapter will pose similar questions of the supranational think-tank environment in the European Union (EU). In particular, this chapter will delineate the main functions and roles that supranational think-tanks play in the policy-making and public policy landscape of the EU. However, the goal of the ensuing analysis is not to situate supranational think-tanks within a comparative framework vis-à-vis American think-tanks; such comparisons will be explicitly identified, analyzed, and explained at a later point. Instead, the purpose is to reveal the supranational think-tank landscape in isolation, ultimately providing the foundations from which genuine comparisons can subsequently be made between supranational and American think-tanks. Accordingly, the supranational think-tank environment will be explored from several standpoints, with the principal objective being to understand what roles and functions these organizations serve and how they do so. As with the previous analysis of American think-tanks and the institutional, political, and financial environment within which they operate, consideration of supranational think-tanks' roles, activities, and outputs will naturally lead to the question of how they have defined and standardized their evaluations of success. Once again, evaluations of 'success' among supranational think-tanks will be considered, not just from the organizations themselves, but also from the viewpoints of other actors—such analysis, however, will take place in the subsequent chapter.

This chapter will proceed in three interrelated stages. First, it is necessary to begin by considering the nature of the organizations that are referred to as 'supranational think-tanks.' By way of identification of the characteristics and features that are ubiquitous among these

organizations, the ambit of relevant organizations will build upon the definition of what constitutes a supranational think-tank as identified previously in the ‘Literature Review.’ Importantly as well, it is prudent to identify those related organizations that will be omitted from analysis, especially those organizations that are *prima facie* similar in edifice and function. In identifying and defending the definitional aspects of this analysis, the supranational think-tank landscape will become clearer and it will be possible to provide an indication of the universe of contemporary supranational think-tanks.

After delineating the ambit of organizations under consideration as ‘supranational think-tanks,’ the principal function of the present analysis will be pursued, which is to say identification and analysis of the roles and functions of these organizations. In particular, it will become apparent that there are two fundamental roles that supranational think-tanks fulfill: first, providing fora for interaction and discussion among policy-related actors, thereby creating and fostering efficacious policy networks, and, second, the production of original research on topical issues facing the supranational policy-making community (referred to as ‘knowledge management’). As will become apparent, supranational think-tanks do not devote an equal degree of resources to these roles, which can be seen as an accurate indication of their own ontological priorities and perceived comparative advantage in the European ‘marketplace of ideas.’ This section will also seek to transpose the discussion of supranational think-tanks’ roles into action ‘on the ground.’ In other words, it will be revealed how supranational think-tanks actually pursue their dualistic mandate from a ‘mission statement’ into a tangible, or otherwise manifest, output. Finally, and as with the discussion on the role of American think-tanks, the third goal is to identify the sources of funding upon which many supranational think-tanks rely,

and the extent to which their funding arrangement informs their activities and perceived role in the supranational policy-making and public policy communities, if any.

5.2 – What Constitutes a Supranational Think-Tank, and How Many are There?

At the outset of this analysis, a definition of ‘supranational think-tanks’ was presented, which was based upon the satisfaction of two principal definitional qualifications. First, a definition of a ‘supranational think-tank’ must necessarily demonstrate a resonance to what scholars and practitioners have identified as universal—or otherwise near-ubiquitous—traits of a ‘think-tank,’ regardless of specific geo-institutional peculiarities. The corollary to this ambition, of course, is the assumption that there exists certain traits and functions that are universally pursued and/or demonstrated by all think-tanks. While the present purpose is not to revisit the ‘definitional dilemma’ that has plagued this particular niche area of scholarly inquiry, it is nevertheless necessary to include a consideration of this debate, however brief. While a definition of ‘supranational think-tank’ ought to be comfortably situated within the definitions and categorizations of scholars who have invested considerable resources in doing so, it is also the case that supranational think-tanks exist in a unique institutional climate that is not as easily comparable across the traditional state-based ‘field of vision’ that the majority of scholars studying think-tanks have worked within. Thus, it is important to allow for a certain degree of fluidity in defining these organizations which exist in, as many have suggested, a *sui generis* institutional arrangement (Glencross 2009, 9; Phelan 2012, 368).⁴ In maintaining a fealty to the definitional articulations of previous think-tank scholars, while also necessarily recognizing and responding to the unique institutional homeland of these organizations under investigation

⁴ For a robust account of the scholarly literature on the *sui generis* nature of the EU, both in favor and opposed, see Phelan 2012.

(McGann 2010, 157), the following definition of what constitutes a supranational think-tank was advanced:

Brussels-based, EU-oriented, non-governmental, non-profit organizations providing research, analysis and advice predominantly on EU-level public policy for the purpose of impacting the EU policy-making process.

This definition of supranational think-tanks does, in this author's estimation, satisfy the conditions of both integrating the principal definitional elements of think-tanks heretofore advanced in the (dominantly American-centric) think-tank literature, while also accounting for the unique institutional setup of the EU and think-tanks' involvement therein.

As previously mentioned, the present purpose is not to reignite discussion and analysis on the definitional components of 'think-tanks,' as several scholars have already dedicated considerable attention to this aspect of the study of think-tanks. Instead, it is recognized that there have been advances and areas of agreement scholars have generally identified in defining think-tanks, the main elements of which are reflected in the aforementioned definition of supranational think-tanks (notwithstanding the EU-centric elements that have been included). Thus, while perhaps unsatisfactory to connoisseurs of the more semantic, ontological debates surrounding think-tanks, it will be assumed that the aforementioned definition of 'supranational think-tank' satisfies the broader definitions of think-tank and the more nuanced, unique elements of think-tanks operating supranationally in the EU.

- [1947] EGMONT- The Royal Institute for International Relations
- [1974] The Trans-European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA)
- [1979] Groupe de Recherche et d'Information sur la Paix et la Securite (GRIP)
- [1983] Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS)
- [1994] Observatoire Social Europeen (OSE)
- [1995] Institut Europeen de la Recherche sur la Cooperation Mediteraneenne et Euro-Arabe (MEDEA)
- [1995] International Security Information Service (ISIS)
- [1995] Migration Policy Group (MPG)
- [1997] European Policy Centre (EPC)
- [1998] Madariaga College of Europe Foundation (MCEF)
- [1999] Friends of Europe (FOE)
- [2002] European Corporate Governance Institute (ECGI)
- [2002] European Ideas Network (EIN)
- [2002] European Policy Institutes Network (EPIN)
- [2002] Pour La Solidarite (PLS)
- [2003] The Lisbon Council for Economic Competitiveness (TLCEC)
- [2005] Bruegel
- [2006] European Centre for International Political Economy (ECIPE)
- [2007] Centre for European Studies (CES)
- [2007] European Liberal Forum (ELF)
- [2007] Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)

Table 1: Supranational think-tanks (by year of founding)

Of course, this definition might not necessarily capture the entire universe of organizations that are sought to be analyzed; similarly, scholars and observers might take exception with certain inclusions or omissions that were made in identifying those organizations which constitute ‘supranational think-tanks.’ Furthermore, some scholars altogether reject the possibility of an agreeable definition for supranational think-tanks; Sherrington, for example, suggests “with respect to the EU, it is futile to strive for one meaning—an exclusive definition

simply cannot be applied to EU-oriented think tanks given the varying contexts in which EU policy is shaped” (Sherrington 2000, 174). Further discrepancies in definitions include, for example, the fact that not all think-tanks focusing on EU public policy are necessarily based in Brussels—Notre Europe, Jacques Delors’ prominent pro-integration think-tank, for instance, is based in Paris and Berlin—while not all Brussels-based think-tanks are necessarily interested in impacting the supranational policy-making process. Further, Brussels offices of national or international think-tanks are not included in this definition, even though in many cases these think-tank ‘branches’ dedicate significant resources to analyzing and impacting EU public policy. It is also worth noting that the internal think-tank(s) of the EU itself (namely the Commission’s ‘Group of Policy Advisors’) have been omitted from the definition of ‘supranational think-tank.’ Despite evidence of these internal ‘working groups’ satisfying most aspects of traditional definitions of a think-tank, not to mention the peculiarity and fascination of these organizations, they are nevertheless too distant from any reasonable conceptualization of ‘non-governmental’ to be included herein.

Notwithstanding the admitted opportunities for definitional critique, it is possible to identify 21 organizations that, to this author’s knowledge, satisfy the definitional criteria as supranational think-tanks (these qualifying organizations are presented in ‘Table 1’). Given an understanding of what type and how many organizations that will be analyzed as ‘supranational think-tanks,’ consideration will now be given to the roles and functions these organizations embody in the EU policy-making and public policy communities.

5.3 – What Roles do Supranational Think-Tanks Play, and How?

It will be argued that supranational think-tanks actively and demonstrably seek to fulfill two principal roles within the supranational policy-making and public policy environment in the

EU. Specifically, it will be advanced that supranational think-tanks' dualistic *raison d'être* include: the cultivation and maintenance of original policy networks and the production and dissemination of research on EU-level public policy matters. Further, supranational think-tanks pursue these two fundamental goals with an asymmetrical internal emphasis and dedication of resources. In particular, it will be demonstrated that supranational think-tanks devote more resources and attention to the cultivation of policy networks than the production and dissemination of original policy-focused research—this is not to suggest, however, that the quality of research produced by supranational think-tanks is necessarily proportional to the degree of internal emphasis placed on this function. These two principal roles are pursued through various activities and outputs of the supranational think-tank community in supporting their efforts to fulfill these macro-level goals. Before analyzing these two principal roles, however, it is necessary to identify and expand upon what will be referred to as 'policy networks,' as this concept is particularly important to understanding the role and functions of supranational think-tanks.

5.3.1 – A Note on 'Policy Networks'

Throughout the rest of this analysis, and especially in the present and subsequent focus on supranational think-tanks, the concept of 'policy networks' will be used extensively and, at certain points, centrally. In particular, the concept of Policy Network Analysis (PNA)—whereby “a policy network is one of a cluster of concepts focusing on government links with, and dependence on, other state and societal actors” (Rhodes 2006, 425)—will be particularly visible in their applicability and suitability to studying supranational think-tanks. From Ullrich's perspective on the broad study of EU think-tanks, for instance, “a potentially useful conceptual model is that of policy networks, particularly when broadly defined as a mode of governance that

incorporates actors from both inside and outside government to facilitate decision-making and implementation” (Ullrich 2004, 62). In concordance with the frequency with which this concept will be employed, it is incumbent to clarify and delineate what will be incorporated in the understanding of what a ‘policy networks’ represent.

Contemporarily, there has been a significant redirection of many scholars’ attention to network analysis and network-driven approaches to political science and public policy research (Fawcett and Daugbjerg 2012, 195; Koliba *et al* 2011, 45), especially within the context of EU studies (Benington and Harvey 1998, 149). Not all, however, are normatively keen to welcome network-driven governance as the (or, ‘a’) new norm of policy-making. Pierre and Peters, for example, note that, as a normative model, “networks are not effective at conflict resolution or in goal setting,” adding that “empirically, networks do not have the capacity to perform many of the tasks required for governance, and especially for democratic governance” (Pierre and Peters 2005, 68). Nevertheless, the networked *approach* to public policy remains incredibly popular, invariably largely due to the increasing recognition that, in twenty-first century governance models, “policy is the product of a complex interplay of people and organizations...[and PNA] provides a more informal picture of how ‘real’ politics takes place” (Parsons 1995, 185). Furthermore, there has been a significant sub-division of the singular ‘policy network’ approach into a number of distinct approaches that each represent their own interpretation and emphases on the principal elements of the network-focused approach. The purpose of this section is not to account for a ‘state of the field’ analysis of the trends and fault-lines shaping scholarly engagement with network theory. Instead, the goal of this section is to identify and explain the main elements of a networked approach, as relevant and constructive to the study of supranational think-tanks and their role within the European public policy community.

Accordingly, if this section's consideration of network approaches seems superficial or otherwise inexhaustive, it is not a reflection of a negative valuation of network approaches, but rather a pragmatic desire to apply elements of network approach most economically and efficiently.

In simplest terms, the *in situ* 'policy network' approach begins from the premise that the interaction of policy-related actors leads to the creation of policy, in a situation where "the policy process is not completely and exclusively structured by formal institutional arrangements" (Marin and Mayntz 1991, 15). In fuller terms, Policy Network Analysis (the broader 'catch-all' title for approaches based on this model) focuses on "a set of meso-level questions about the relationship between policy-making outcomes, the structure of a network and the inclusion or exclusion of certain individuals or groups from within that network" (Fawcett and Daugbjerg 2012, 195). Thus, subscribers to the Policy Network Analysis approach assume that "policy-making outcomes are influenced by the structure of a network and the interactions within it, including the inclusion and exclusion of certain interests in the policy-making process" (Fawcett and Daugbjerg 2012, 198). The emergence of network analysis as a popular approach to public policy studies can be seen as a response to the changing nature of public policy in many institutional contexts, namely the marked trend toward "the existence of horizontal relations between government, administration and organized interests" (Kenis and Schneider 1991, 27). However, it is abundantly clear that 'policy' does not simply emerge upon the congregation of two or more actors with a tertiary role in the formulation of policy. In other words, the ostensible parsimony of the 'policy network' approach requires further analytical and theoretical elements to translate this simple explanation into a sufficiently robust understanding of how networks attain agency in the creation of policy through the various stages of policy-making. There is even debate as to "whether networks have explanatory power or not," (Fawcett and Daugbjerg 2012,

199) vis-à-vis their importance in the formulation and shaping of policy outcomes. Nevertheless, given the importance think-tanks place on their interaction (or, ‘networking’) with policy-relevant actors (and, as will become particularly apparent, particularly so for supranational think-tanks), the application of network-based approaches to the analysis of think-tanks seems particularly opportune, methodological issues notwithstanding. It is important, however, to recognize the absent uniformity of a single ‘networked’ approach—“networks can vary along several dimensions and any combination of these dimensions” (Rhodes 2006, 428). Thus, to make a successful integration of PNA it is necessary to consider the various peculiarities and differences among competing PNA approaches.

Within PNA, there are two principal sub-approaches that have been extensively employed by scholars, and are particularly fruitful for the present purpose and scope of analysis. These two approaches, comprising ‘policy community’ and ‘issue network’ approaches, can both be used as efficacious tools in understanding how think-tanks interact with policy-relevant actors and the policy-making community more broadly. It is first necessary to elucidate these two sub-approaches to evaluate their appropriateness for the study of supranational think-tanks. The ‘policy community’ approach acknowledges the presence of a policy network “when a very limited number of actors share a strategic policy agenda and possess resources, but are dependent on others to achieve their aims” (Fawcett and Daugbjerg 2012, 199). Further, within a ‘policy community,’ there typically exists a general agreement on some of the more fundamental assumptions and beliefs about the optimal nature and direction of public policy. As Rhodes suggests, a given ‘policy community’ has “evolved its own approach to problems: established routines of contact, shared perceptions and values, and the stock of tried knowledge and policies brought to bear on new problems” (Rhodes 1981, 118). Understandably, actors and organizations

involved in a ‘policy community’ are generally enthusiastic about their participation therein, as “there is a balance of power, not necessarily one in which all members equally benefit but one in which all members see themselves as in a positive-sum game” (Rhodes 2006, 428). Here, supranational think-tanks can be conceptualized as one such policy-relevant actors/organization that is able to contribute to the formulation of policy priorities and regulate the parameters of debate on matters facing European public policy. As Stone highlights, “the ‘policy community’ is the realm of the think tank where relatively horizontal relationships pertain. Think tanks interact with other stakeholders—the media, NGOs, political parties, industry representatives and bureaucrats. It is in these realms where think tanks play brokerage and gate-keeping roles that constantly redefine science/policy boundaries” (Stone 2007, 268). Yet, because supranational think-tanks do not possess institutional power, they therefore require the attention and openness of institutional actors to fulfill the policy priorities that they have formulated at arms-length from the institutional policy-making apparatus. For supranational think-tanks, given their inability to formally inject themselves in the policy-making process—yet given their fervent desire to engage with imminent public policy issues facing the EU—the ‘policy community’ approach appears to be applicable, at first glance, to the analysis of supranational think-tanks.

Unlike the ‘policy community’ approach, in which a typically small number of actors frequently bargain within an environment of consensual principals and procedures, the ‘issue network’ approach provides a markedly different environment in which policy-relevant actors interact. According to Martin Smith (Smith 1993, 126), some of the more defining traits of ‘issue networks’ include: absent consensus on fundamental policy principles/procedures, a reduced risk of sub-group dominance, large number of members, instability, and inconsistency in their interaction. McFarland provides an indication of how members of an ‘issue network’ interact,

positing that this arrangement represents little more than a “communications network of those interested in policy in some area, including government authorities, legislators, businessmen, lobbyists, and even academics and journalists . . . [that] . . . constantly communicates criticisms of policy and generates ideas for new policy initiatives” (McFarland 1987, 146). Etymologically, ‘issue networks’ can be understood as representing the earliest original conceptualizations of PNA, with Scharpf suggesting, in 1977, “in its most basic sense, the term ‘network’ merely denotes, in a suggestive manner, the fact that policy making involves a large number and wide variety of public and private actors from the different levels and functional areas of government and society” (Kenis and Schneider 1991, 30). Rhodes, one of the most visible scholars working within a networked paradigm, offers a definition of policy networks which similarly seems tantamount to an ‘issue network’ definition: “policy networks are sets of formal institutional and informal linkages between governmental and other actors structured around shared if endlessly negotiated beliefs and interests in public policy making and implementation” (Rhodes 2006, 426). In an ‘issue network’ context, similar to a pluralist understanding of policy-making (McFarland 2004, 52), supranational think-tanks would seek to have their voices heard louder than a large number of other actors also seeking to have their voices heard, advocating on behalf of a viewpoint or ideology that may be far from universally endorsed or considered feasible. Unlike the ‘policy community’ approach, in which supranational think-tanks’ interaction with policy-relevant actors is deliberate, organized, and planned, the ‘issue network’ approach endorses more of a randomized pattern of interaction between civil society and policy-makers (or, if perhaps not ‘random,’ certainly less frequent and predicable), largely defined by more informality than ‘policy communities’ (Davis 1998, 37). Ultimately, then, “[policy] communities

are stronger versions of [issue] networks” (Hill 2009, 58). The principal divergences among the ‘policy community’ and ‘issue network’ approaches are presented in ‘Table 2.’

By viewing supranational think-tanks as policy-relevant actors without institutional or official ‘power,’ we begin to see how it is possible for these organizations to exert various forms of ‘influence’ and socialization with those actors which *are* capable and charged with exercising formal power. Thus, through this understanding of ‘policy networks’ and think-tanks’ role therein, it becomes possible to understand more fully how a third-party, non-governmental organization can impact the decision-making processes and considerations of policy-makers and the policy-making community. Some scholars, furthermore, even suggest that formal policy-makers do not necessarily need to be directly involved in a policy network for non-governmental network actors to exude impact in policy-making. As Marin and Mayntz suggest, “if ‘policy’ usually means public policy in policy network studies, this does not imply that state agents must be the focal or dominant participants,” adding “in largely self-regulated sectors, on the other hand, *public* policy may well be formulated by private actors (to be initiated or subsequently endorsed by the proper political authorities)” (Marin and Mayntz 1991, 17). Consideration will now be given to how supranational think-tanks seek to fulfill their principal goals, beginning with the fora and processes through which supranational think-tanks foment, engage with, and impact ‘policy networks.’

Dimensions	Policy community	Issue network
<i>Membership</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very limited number of members • Narrow range of interests represented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large number of members • Wide range of interests represented
<i>Integration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bargaining and negotiations • Frequent interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultations • Unstable pattern of interaction
<i>Institutionalisation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consensus on policy principles and procedures to approach policy problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict over policy principles and procedures to approach policy problems

Table 2 (The 'Policy Network Continuum')

Source: Daugbjerg (1998).

5.3.2 – Supranational Think-Tanks and Policy Networks

Supranational think-tanks aspire primarily to foster, foment, and cultivate networks of policy-relevant actors and organizations across multiple levels of involvement and integration in public policy. In more ideal-type terms, “as facilitators of platforms, think tanks seek to create spaces (seminars, workshops and conferences) in which a wide variety of policy actors come together to discuss policy problems in order to find solutions that fit the demands of the political system” (Perez 2014b, 334). As indicated in the previous section’s consideration of the more ontological aspects of ‘policy networks,’ there are a variety of mechanisms and forms in which supranational think-tanks can both facilitate and participate within these varied networks. In this

sense, supranational think-tanks view their purpose primarily through an intermediation function. Whereas in a traditional intermediation context borrowers and lenders are introduced, supranational think-tanks pursue a similar role—though not matching borrowers and lenders in a pecuniary sense, supranational think-tanks can facilitate and forge connections between diverse policy actors who, by virtue of their distinct individual/organizational networks, might not otherwise have the opportunity (or the impetus) to interact. Through supranational think-tanks’ events, seminars, workshops, etc., for example, a large number of policy-relevant and policy-sensitive actors interact with each other around a central theme, discussion, or debate. Accordingly, supranational think-tanks can be seen to play a ‘matching’ role whereby individuals and organizations are exposed to each other under the auspices of a given think-tank, so that policy actors (like-minded or ideologically disparate) are introduced and begin the building of a constructive policy-oriented relationship. Here, supranational think-tanks can be said to facilitate the creation and fomentation of ‘policy communities’ and ‘issue networks’ between actors, inside and outside government, who possess a vested interest in certain policy outputs and orientations in the EU. For instance, Ullrich suggests that “although these various communities often differ in terms of nationality and specific policy issues, think tanks provide a primary domain in which these various policy communities overlap” (Ullrich 2004, 63). As with any polity, there are myriad actors and organizations with a vested interest in the deliberations and outcomes of the policy-making process. By serving an intermediating role, supranational think-tanks are able to promote consensus-building and discussion among actors/organizations with a vested interest in policy outcomes and public policy in general, regardless of whether these actors’ desired outcomes are initially mutually exclusive. But, why are supranational think-tanks particularly well-positioned for the creation/facilitation of policy networks? There are two

principal comparative advantages that supranational think-tanks are able to provide in their policy network intermediation capacity: fostering debate and building consensus.

One of the principal functions that supranational think-tanks serve in their intermediation role is the ability to generate and, subsequently, moderate debate over public policy issues, oftentimes with a bias toward pressing concerns and issues facing policy-makers. Such a topical bias is understandable, especially given that supranational think-tank fora are heavily frequented by active policy-makers from the various institutions of the EU, especially the European Commission and the European Parliament. As Perez corroborates, “the participation of EU representatives is considerable; they make up more than a quarter of the total [attendees at supranational think-tank fora] and most of them come from the Parliament and the Commission, with representatives from the latter constituting almost half the total number of EU representatives attending fora” (Perez 2014b, 157). Furthermore, according to first-hand accounts garnered by Ullrich, “bringing EU policy-makers together through their fora was mentioned on numerous occasions by those interviewed as one of the key impacts EU think tanks have on the EU policy process” (Ullrich 2004, 67). It is not just policy-makers, however, that are intimately involved and benefit from the fora provided by supranational think-tanks.

Ullrich goes on to suggest:

through offering various policy actors, including civil servants, politicians, academics, lobbyists and members of the interested public, a forum for debate, think tanks allow for the sharing of ideas, broadening of perspectives and exchange of information (Ullrich 2004, 67).

Supranational think-tanks frequently host adversarial-based discussions and debates, in which expert speakers and stakeholders engage in a robust interrogation and analysis of a given subject matter, frequently with conflicting viewpoints and interpretations. These debates, typically open to the public and frequently disseminated and marketed online after they take place, allow

policy-relevant actors to grapple with the pressing public policy issues facing the EU while simultaneously representing the affiliated organizations from which they emanate. In other words, individuals engaging in think-tank sponsored debates are oftentimes ‘borrowed’ from other policy-focused organizations or the civil society community (not to mention individuals representing the sponsoring think-tank itself in debate). Accordingly, debates facilitated by supranational think-tanks are not simply a venue for these organizations to publicize their research and embolden their recognition among the EU-interested public (although this, unsurprisingly, takes place). Instead, these debates allow genuine experts from a diverse range of policy-relevant organizations to congregate in an intellectually-stimulating environment surrounded by an engaged audience. The facilitation of debates supports the notion of supranational think-tanks as representing arbiters of ‘issue networks’ in the EU, whereby a range of diverse voices are being heard by each other outside of a formal policy-making context.

The preponderance of the utilization of supranational think-tanks as fora for discussion and debate on pressing matters facing the EU can be explained, in significant part, by the expanding range of competences ‘uploaded’ to EU-level institutions, especially since the mid-1980s (Boucher 2004, 11). As Sherrington posits, “there appears to have been a growth in think tank activity at the European level in the last two decades, perhaps simply explained by the deepening of EU competences, the increased impact of EU policy-making on member states, and thus a heightened awareness of all things European” (Sherrington 2000, 173). Further, the increased institutionalization and professionalization of supranational think-tanks as veritable contributors to the public policy community in Brussels suggests that “think tanks certainly have a presence within EU policy-making processes” (Sherrington 2000, 187). For instance, “a researcher within an EU think tank argued that while historically debates over Europe had been

primarily national in their outlook, due to the increase in think tank networks and collaboration on research projects, as well as the growing frequency with which European policy actors are meeting in think tank sponsored forums, a truly European debate could be said to be developing” (Ullrich 2004, 61).

In addition to the intellectual and epistemic benefits that are afforded to the policy-related experts who are engaging in these debates and discussions, the politically-engaged and interested public also benefit from these events hosted by supranational think-tanks. By being exposed to the viewpoints and argumentation of some of the most authoritative sources and informed opinions on a given policy area, the politically-engaged European public is able to benefit from a wide variety of viewpoints on some of the most pressing issues facing the supranational polity. Thus, by hosting debates and lively discussions on issues facing the EU, supranational think-tanks are able to facilitate interaction among a diverse set of policy-related actors with aligned (as in ‘policy communities’) or competing (as in ‘issue networks’) interpretations of public policy issues. Further, the broader European public is able to interpret public policy issues through various perspectives and standpoints that have been articulated through debates/discussions under the auspices of a given supranational think-tank.

In addition to the facilitation of debate among policy-relevant actors, typically from organizations and institutions with an investment in the outcomes of policy-making, supranational think-tanks also strive to organize events, conferences, seminars, and other collegial contexts in which actors and organizations converge and interact in-person—this form of interaction is more hospitable to the transposition of an ‘issue network’ into a ‘policy community,’ with a more intimate exchange between policy-relevant actors taking place. As Perez suggests, “by creating fora, think tanks are able to gather a wide variety of policy actors,

from policymakers to corporate representatives to academics, in order to discuss topics of particular relevance” (Perez 2014b, 147). In doing so, supranational think-tanks are able to market themselves as consensus-building organizations that are able to unite disparate policy actors and organizations and, through collegial discussion and compromise, promote the building of trust and, ultimately, consensus among these actors/organizations. Supranational think-tanks are, by providing a neutral environment for consensus to be reached, distinct in that they are able to provide a space where the typical trappings of acrimonious, divisive institutional decision-making can be preempted by discussion and consensus-building within a think-tank, if only informally. Further, supranational think-tanks are also able to provide an environment for discussion that is marked by credibility and political neutrality. In other words, while a policymaker from the EU might come under scrutiny for meeting with corporate and civil society actors at first-class restaurant or lavish festivity, interacting with the same individuals under the aegis of a think-tank does not immediately arouse suspicion or allegations of moral impropriety. By providing a neutral forum and inculcating the promotion of consensus-building, supranational think-tanks benefit from the visibility that many high-profile actors and organizations can bring to events and activities of the given think-tank. As Stone suggests, think-tank fora, more generally,

serve an intangible purpose of promoting interaction among people from diverse backgrounds who would not ordinarily meet but who have common interests. Importantly, think tanks provide a neutral territory where people feel more comfortable and have an opportunity to mingle. Academics can meet practitioners, business people can discuss regulatory policy with bureaucrats, and activists can confront politicians (Stone 1996, 126).

Not surprisingly, supranational think-tanks do not market these events as existing for the purpose of fostering compromise among policy actors. Instead, these events are mostly advertised as serving an educational and informational purpose in which interested individuals and

organizations can expand their competence on a particular policy domain. However, by assembling actors and organizations with vested interests and desired outcomes in certain policy areas it is inevitable (and desirable) that these actors/organizations will interact with each other; as such, the fostering of ‘issue networks’ or ‘policy communities’ is significantly likely within these environments. Ideally, from the perspective of supranational think-tanks, these interactions will promote the development of constructive consensus among these actors/organizations, ultimately manifesting in policy-making outcomes and/or public policy priorities/narratives within the EU. In making the case that this consensus-building has taken place under the auspices of a think-tank event or initiative, supranational think-tanks are able to provide an indication that they are impacting the policy-making process and public policy environment, despite not directly engaging with the policy-making process in an official capacity.

Supranational think-tanks are, above all their functions and objectives, interested in building efficacious policy networks among actors and organizations that possess an investment in the outcome of policy-making and the issues facing EU public policy. In terms more aligned with the scholarly literature on ‘policy networks,’ supranational think-tanks can create and regulate both policy communities and issue networks around policy-relevant actors in the EU. To do so, supranational think-tanks provide opportune fora through which third-party, policy-relevant actors can engage in a neutral environment for the purposes of consensus-building among actors with institutionalized power. Namely, this consensus-building can take place through the various events and activities supranational think-tanks facilitate, particularly through the hosting of policy-relevant debates and the conferences, seminars, and other environments in which actors/organizations are congregated in a policy-relevant context. Ultimately, “EU think tanks could be one factor in the development of a Europe-wide policy community” (Ullrich

2004, 63), emanating from their fostering of issue networks and policy communities through their fora. While supranational think-tanks are primarily concerned with their efforts to build and maintain policy communities and issue networks, they devote a noticeable degree of their resources to fulfilling a ‘knowledge management’ role, which will now be considered.

5.3.3 – Supranational Think-Tanks and ‘Knowledge Management’

The second principal role adopted by supranational think-tanks, unlike the fomentation of policy networks, will be considerably more familiar to those with a distinctly American conceptualization of think-tanks and their role within policy-making and the broader public policy environment. Specifically, the second function of supranational think-tanks is to serve a ‘knowledge management’ role, which “entails the transformation of comprehensive research and analysis” (Stone 1996, 122) into publicly disseminated output.

Through a ‘knowledge management’ role, supranational think-tanks produce and disseminate original research on matters that are of immediate, or otherwise relevant, interest to policy-makers and policy-related actors at the EU level. To do so, “think tanks must have good information, good statistics and good research” (Ullrich 2004, 66). By ‘knowledge management,’ it is implied that supranational think-tanks are able to exert a degree of control over the research, information, and knowledge that is disseminated to the policy-making community, and are therefore able to fulfill a regulatory role in terms of which public policy issues and concerns are at the forefront, and which issues are relegated to more tertiary status. However, the production and dissemination of original policy-focused research is not the sole means by which supranational think-tanks are able to assert a ‘knowledge management’ role. In addition to the familiar process of the production of original public policy research, supranational think-tanks also support their ‘knowledge management’ role through broader educational outreach

initiatives, such as the hosting of various courses and programs for the education of students and policy actors alike on relevant approaches, issues, and strategies for engaging with supranational policy-making. In particular, there are two main activities and outputs supranational think-tanks have employed to assert their ‘knowledge management’ role within the broader EU policy-making community: original research and educational programming. These ‘knowledge management’ activities will now be explored.

In alignment with one of the principal roles of American think-tanks (and, by extension, the American think-tank model), supranational think-tanks are invested in producing and disseminating research on issues facing the supranational policy-making community, and oftentimes those issues which are most pressing. According to Ullrich, for example, supranational think-tanks gear their research resources toward “analysis of policies, development of alternative ideas and providing relevant information” (Ullrich 2004, 67). There are, however, certain discernible motifs of supranational think-tanks’ approach to the inculcation of ‘knowledge management’ through original research, from both the ‘production’ and ‘dissemination’ aspects of this process. In particular, supranational think-tanks’ publications demonstrate a propensity toward a pro-European bias, frequently ‘outsource’ to authors from other institutions and organizations, and provide a sizable diversity of formats, lengths, and target audiences of their publications. These trends will now be explored.

Though an admittedly difficult assertion to quantify, it is suggested that supranational think-tanks have tended to congregate around a particular ideological viewpoint, the effect of which can be discerned through the publications and research output of these organizations. In particular, supranational think-tanks tend to demonstrate a pro-integration, pro-European bias, through which the proposals and recommendations of their publications align with processes and

activities that would strengthen and embolden the supranational decision-making competences of the EU. Thus, in the principal policy areas targeted by supranational think-tanks, proposals and conclusions advanced frequently include the increased assertion of EU competence over national-level decision-making and the further imposition of EU regulation and activity in policy areas.⁵ To be sure, there are supranational think-tanks that express disdain over the intrusion of supranational competence in certain policy areas and, in some cases, suggest the rollback of certain supranational areas of jurisdiction. However, the vast majority of supranational think-tanks are aligned within an observably pro-European and pro-integration viewpoint, and this disposition translates into the proposals and conclusions reached in the research emanating from these organizations. Thus, unlike the American think-tank landscape in which there is a clear ideological pluralism and (as demonstrated) increasing representation of the ideological spectrum, supranational think-tanks have tended to congregate around a pro-European ‘starting-point.’ It should be added that, given the main sources of funding that supranational think-tanks rely on (which will be revealed shortly), it is not surprising that this pro-integration bias has become commonplace among these organizations. In particular, the pursuit of research contacts from the major institutions in the EU has encouraged supranational think-thinks to provide indication of their support for, and willingness to provide, academic credibility for the broader integration project in Europe.

⁵ Though not particularly relevant to the theoretical paradigm and approaches used herein, the popular European interdisciplinary area of ‘EU studies’ has, especially from a political science standpoint, been marked by a dichotomous theoretical debate over the loci of ‘power’ in the European integration process, empirically and normatively. Namely, ‘neofunctionalism’ and ‘liberal intergovernmentalism’ have popularly been pitted against one another as competing visions of European integration (McCormick 2007, 233). With clear roots in early functionalist approaches (Mitrany 1943), ‘neofunctionalism’ views the processes of European integration as constituting a positively-reinforcing cycle, whereby integration in one area/sector begets integration in a related sector, *ad infinidum* (see Haas 1958; Lindberg 1963). By contrast, ‘liberal intergovernmentalism’ contends that competence in European policy-making rests firmly with its constituent member state governments; thus, any advances in supranational governance or competence are at the discretion and by strict terms of member state governments (see Hoffman 1995; Moravcsik 1993; Moravcsik 1998).

The second discernible trend through the original research of supranational think-tanks is the extent to which these organizations are willing to ‘outsource’ their research and publication agendas to external actors. In other words, supranational think-tanks frequently rely on scholars, practitioners, and commentators from outside their organizations to contribute to their research output. Though these individuals may be affiliated with these organizations in some capacity (official, freelanced, or otherwise), it is nevertheless the case that conducting and publishing original research for a supranational think-tank is not the primary occupation of many of these contributors to think-tank publications. In contrast, it was observed earlier that American think-tanks, and especially the most visible of them, typically employ full-time research and support staff for the purposes of producing timely, acerbic research for the expedient digestion of policy-makers. For reasons that will become apparent as attention is turned to the funding predicament of supranational think-tanks, these organizations do not possess the institutional resources to have a swiftly deployable cadre of researchers and support staff for publication purposes.

The final major observable trait of the research output of supranational think-tanks is the marked diversity of forms of publication, with there appearing to be a healthy division between short commentaries, journal article-length contributions (often as part of a themed ‘series’), EU institution-contracted research, and revenue-raising book-length manuscripts. Though this trend is not necessarily contradictory to the American-centric model of think-tank activity/output, given the comparatively limited resources many supranational think-tanks possess, it is surprising that they are nevertheless able to maintain a well-rounded publication profile, generally-speaking. In short, supranational think-tanks do maintain an active research profile, though this area of think-tank activity does not represent a particularly high priority for these organizations, especially when compared to the American think-tank model. Despite the

comparatively tertiary research/publication priority for supranational think-tanks, they are nevertheless distinct in their typically pro-integration/Europe motif, the frequent ‘outsourcing’ of research to external authors, and the surprising diversity of publication formats vis-à-vis their limited resource devotion to this area. Despite supranational think-tanks pursuing an independent and discretionary research agenda, there is a caveat. Namely, supranational think-tanks actively pursue research contracts being outsourced by the institutions of the EU, predominantly from the European Commission and European Parliament. These contracts, which allow the EU’s institutions to delegate research that would be better suited for external actors or cannot be sufficiently completed ‘in-house,’ provide supranational think-tanks with a lucrative source of funding while also ostensibly enhancing the academic credibility and public/private perceptions of the capacity for original research of these organizations. These contracts, which have come to represent an important source of funding for supranational think-tanks, will be more fully explored at a later point.

In addition to maintaining a research profile, supranational think-tanks pursue other activities and outputs in fulfilling their ‘knowledge management’ role. One such activity that is particularly, and increasingly important for supranational think-tanks, is the organization and execution of educational programs and courses designed for policy practitioners and the public. As a revenue-raising tool, many of the larger and more established supranational think-tanks have leveraged their recognized expertise and illusion of immersion in the policy-making community as a means of enticing members of the public and policy-making community to attend these educational programs. Thus, by highlighting their high-profile interactions and events with policy-makers, these organizations are able to market their educational programs as representing an opportunity for the public to engage with senior decision-makers in EU policy-

making. These educational programs are typically short in duration (oftentimes over a weekend) and generally focus on a specific, more focused area of public policy that might otherwise be too narrow or transferable for an educational institution to offer. In this context, supranational think-tanks are able to tailor the area of inquiry in these programs to areas of research expertise that the given think-tank possesses. Thus, supranational think-tanks are able to offer an opportunity for the public and policy-making community to become deeply immersed in a parochial public policy issue over a very short period of time. While supranational think-tanks are able to offer a clear comparative advantage to the public and policy-making community in their offerings, think-tanks themselves also benefit significantly from these educational programs for two principal reasons.

The first principal benefit supranational think-tanks extract from their educational programs is the added source of revenue these programs provide. Typically, think-tanks will charge a fee for participation in these educational programs to offset associated organizational and operational costs of hosting these programs, including the costs of external speakers. However, given that supranational think-tanks typically host these educational programs within their facilities in Brussels, overhead costs for the events are modest, and think-tanks can typically count on these programs to bolster institutional revenue from year-to-year. Aside from the more tangible benefit supranational think-tanks can derive from offering educational programs, think-tanks are also able to, in more ethereal terms, regulate the parameters within which some of the most advanced public policy discussions and debates are taking place. By providing educational programming to some of the most engaged and interested members of the public and EU-level policy-making community, supranational think-tanks are able to determine which topics and areas of public policy are going to be analyzed and discussed in this context. Furthermore, these

educational fora offer think-tanks the ability to market and publicize their own research activities; as Perez suggests, “the multiple seminars, workshops and conferences that think tanks organise help them convey the information they generate, as well as attract the attention of new publics, partners and sponsors” (Perez 2014, 327). Thus, it is at the discretion of supranational think-tanks which topics and areas of public policy are going to be focused on and discussed at length, and which areas will be omitted from consideration by attendees and speakers. While it is an inherently difficult assertion to quantify or supersede anecdotal affirmation, educational programming nevertheless remains a theoretically possible opportunity for supranational think-tanks to regulate the parameters of debate and discussion on public policy issues affecting the EU. By assembling public and private policy-relevant actors under the auspices of a think-tank, it is possible for these organizations to direct the discussion and debate in a direction of their choosing. In short, supranational think-tanks benefit in offering educational programming through the revenue-raising capacity of this programming and the discretion of the given think-tank in regulating the parameters of debate and discussion within diverse echelons of the EU-level public policy community.

In pursuing a ‘knowledge management’ role within the EU public policy community, supranational think-tanks focus on two primary modes of facilitation and regulation of their research and analysis. First, and most familiar to think-tank scholars from other geo-political contexts, supranational think-tanks maintain a research agenda that includes the production and dissemination of original research on issues and concerns facing the supranational policy-making community. It was further demonstrated that these think-tanks’ research output tends to align with a pro-integration ideology, ‘outsources’ research and analysis to external authors, and involves a wide range of publication formats. The second principal ‘knowledge management’

activity that supranational think-tanks pursue involves the provision of educational programming for policy-making actors/organizations and the broader public. In doing so, think-tanks are able to theoretically exert a regulatory effect on the extent to which certain public policy issues are emphasized or omitted, though it was qualified that this assertion is particularly difficult to validate in a methodologically rigorous manner. Subsequent analysis will consider how supranational think-tanks sustain their financial subsistence, and what impact this funding arrangement might have upon their organization's activities and output.

5.4 – Who Pays for Supranational Think-Tanks?

From our earlier analysis of American think-tanks, it was clear that the funding environment facing think-tanks has informed the ambit of activities and outputs they pursue. Similarly, supranational think-tanks do not exist in an infinite funding environment where donors are exponential—rather, “the Brussels think-tanks suffer from a desperate lack of money” (*The Economist*, “The dodgy side,” 2009). Thus, the practical realities of precarious funding sources has forced these organizations to focus on activities and outputs which enhance their financial security and, by extension, institutional longevity. However, supranational think-tanks extract their financial resources from different and diverse sources than their American counterparts. This section will now identify and consider the trends that exist across supranational think-tank funding arrangements.

Among supranational think-tanks, there are four main sources of funding that comprise the bulwark of inflow revenues in any given year. First, supranational think-tanks rely on individual and organizational membership fees for a substantial, annualized, and consistent source of revenue. While supranational think-tanks reap financial reward from (typically) recurring membership fees, members themselves, in both individual and organizational form,

benefit from a variety of privileges, oftentimes including guaranteed or priority access to most of the think-tank's events, frequent summaries of EU public policy issues and events, and the opportunity to network among the membership, in addition to other institution-specific features. Though many of a given supranational think-tanks' short publications/output will be available free-of-charge to the public, this is not always the case. Thus, for example, "where access is restricted, newsletters are frequently offered as a special service to members" (Perez 2014, 337). Further, organizational membership can be understood to entail the added benefit of affording access to policy-makers and policy actors who appear at think-tanks as speakers, debaters, or in another capacity. Not surprisingly, then, "a considerable number of think tanks received support from foundations, associations and NGOs" (Perez 2014, 335), especially those with a sensitivity to European public policy. In this sense, organizations benefit from membership mostly by the unparalleled access that allows for direct interaction with policy-makers and the EU policy-making elite outside of formal channels. In this sense, organizational membership within a supranational think-tank can easily be construed as an additional aspect to an organization's governmental relations or lobbying efforts, albeit through an ostensibly indirect route. As *The Economist* suggests, "there comes a whole tranche of corporate sponsored activity that teeters on the brink of lobbying: conferences with senior EU officials as speakers, but which are organized on behalf of big sponsors who send executives to mingle and meet the right contacts" (*The Economist*, "The dodgy side," 2009). Further, "many supranational think-tanks depend on big corporate sponsors, so that the lines between research and lobbying become queasily blurred" (*The Economist*, "Miss the target," 2007). Regardless of the motivation of organizational or individual membership within a supranational think-tank, this funding source is a *sine qua non* for many think-tanks' financial security.

The second major source of revenue for supranational think-tanks emanates from the various events and educational programs they facilitate. While individual and organizational members are oftentimes privy to complementary access to events hosted by a given think-tank, major speakers and debates will frequently require a fee for access, and these high-profile events are regularly attended by non-members. Here, supranational think-tanks are typically able to recuperate the cost of the respective speaker(s), usually with a surplus. While events such as guest speakers and debates do provide think-tanks with a solid revenue base, the main sources of think-tanks' event-based revenues emanate from their educational programming and conferences. Though perhaps not as frequent as invited speakers and debates, educational programming typically requires a larger devotion of resources and personnel from the think-tank, and this higher marginal cost is reflected in the costs borne by attendees at these conferences, workshops, seminars, etc. Accordingly, while supranational think-tanks do oftentimes enjoy a net financial gain from the hosting of speakers and debates, the major event-based source of revenue for these organizations rests in their educational programming.

The third major source of funding supranational think-tanks typically rely on is funding from corporations, beyond and in addition to the cost of organizational/corporate membership. Here, corporations might be inclined to contribute to supranational think-tanks on the basis of an ideological alignment, the particular areas of research the given think-tank focuses on, or personal connections between think-tank and corporate leadership, among a host of potential reasons. In the case where supranational think-tanks rely especially on corporate donors and membership, the given think-tank might offer certain programming or events specifically designed for corporate members. For example, "EU think tank-sponsored fora exclusively for fee-paying corporate members (referred to by some as 'new' policy communities, as compared to

the more traditional ‘old’ policy communities that involve a mix of government, corporate and citizen representatives) have been described as ‘private diplomacy’” (Ullrich 2004, 63).

Whatever the impetus or reason for corporate contributions to a supranational think-tank, it is nevertheless clear that these organizations rely on corporate funding for a significant portion of their annual funding, and provide programs, activities, and outputs which benefit the corporate sector specifically. In Sherrington’s analysis of two of the most prominent supranational think-tanks (CEPS and EPC), “what is most noticeable in both cases is the significance of the corporate sector in their structures and work programmes” (Sherrington 2000, 182). To extend this argument even further, Sherrington adds “the mission of the exclusively EU-oriented Brussels based think tanks is predominantly corporate” (Sherrington 2000, 188). To scholars such as Sherrington, then, supranational think-tanks exist in a state of dependency on corporate actors for the sustenance of their operations. While this author is not convinced that the dependency on corporate actors is as resounding as Sherrington might suggest, it is nevertheless a truism that supranational think-tanks prosper from monetary contributions of corporate actors. This generosity is then reflected in corporate-specific programming and opportunities for corporate actors to engage with the policy-making and public policy communities in Brussels.

The final source of funding supranational think-tanks rely on, and the funding source which is most problematic for the conceptual nexus of think-tanks and ‘independence,’ is the institutional apparatus of the EU. In stark contrast to the institutional environments in which many of the world’s think-tanks operate, most supranational think-tanks rely heavily on various institutional organs and funding schemes of the EU for (in many cases, by far) the largest component of their financial inflows. The ontological challenge for those with an unwavering insistence on complete ‘independence’ for supranational think-tanks is felt most strongly here—

if 'independence' is to be interpreted as requiring no financial relationship between policy-making institutions and think-tanks, most supranational think-tanks will fail this litmus test. As

Diane Stone suggests,

the Western view that a think tank requires independence or autonomy from the state, corporate or other interests in order to be 'free-thinking' does not accord with experiences in other cultures," adding that "in many countries, the line between policy intellectuals and the state is blurred to such an extent that to talk of independence as a defining characteristic of think tanks makes little sense (Stone 2007, 265).

However, if one's conception of 'independence' includes a provision for allowing institutional funding (if untied or otherwise unconditional), then supranational think-tanks are arguably 'independent.' Some scholars, however, have marked difficulty in escaping the American-centric conceptualization of think-tanks vis-à-vis 'independence.' As a demonstration of this, and as though most supranational think-tanks themselves are overjoyed at their current funding situation, "James McGann invited European think tank to get out of the trap of dependency towards public funding and to regain their independence" (Notre Europe 2005, 4). Yet, according to Ullrich's estimation of EU policy-makers' consideration of 'independence' and supranational think-tanks, "preliminary research of the views of EU policy-makers indicates that the outputs of EU think tanks, particularly those operating in Brussels, are seen as credible sources of information and policy advice due to their independence" (Ullrich 2004, 66). Thus, where McGann sees a glaring dependence of supranational think-tanks, Ullrich sees precisely the opposite. Notwithstanding one's interpretation of whether EU institutional funding negates the 'independence' of supranational think-tanks, some of these organizations rely on EU institutions for over half of their annual operating budgets, the absence of which would challenge the ability of many think-tanks to continue their operations. Though there are many sources of EU

institutional funding that supranational think-thanks rely on, there are two principal types of funding that are made available to these organizations.

First, many of the EU's institutions rely on external civil society organizations for the fulfillment of research projects that are better suited to be executed externally than through the limited internal resources and/or expertise. While the institutions of the EU do possess the capacity and resources to provide high-quality research internally, the demand for original, timely research on pressing matters facing the EU cannot be covered sufficiently by the EU's institutions alone. Accordingly, during periods of high-demand for complex research projects and the ability of external actors to provide such research in an objective and rigorous way, EU institutions frequently outsource research contracts to third-party organizations. Thus, supranational think-tanks are able to, and actively do, bid for these grants/tenders on the basis of their demonstrable expertise and capacity for effective and rigorous research on issues facing the EU. This way, the EU's institutions are able to pursue those research projects which are internally deemed to be most pressing and in-demand vis-à-vis the issues and priorities facing the EU, without the high burden of internal resource devotion for the fulfillment of these research necessities.

Think-tanks, for their part, benefit tremendously from these contracts. First, and most tangibly, EU research contracts emanate from the sizable funds these institutions have dedicated to the production and dissemination of research on matters facing the EU from a wide variety of perspectives. Thus, supranational think-tanks are keen to attract the substantial funding that the various institutions of the EU have allocated for external research. Second, EU research contracts afford supranational think-tanks a degree of prestige, given that the assignment of research contracts suggests that the institution(s) these think-tanks seek to analyze and impact recognize

their expertise in a given area of public policy. Thus, supranational think-tanks are able to market their recognition and expertise afforded to them by various EU institutions, bolstering their case for relevance and integration in the EU policy-making and public policy community. In short, then, EU research contracts are seen by supranational think-tanks as representing a financially-lucrative means of facilitating highly-visible and prestigious research—effectively, EU research contracts allow supranational think-tanks to fulfill one of their principal functions (research production and dissemination) and sustain their operational longevity (through the associated generous funding schemes). Thus, supranational think-tanks are particularly keen to compete for and secure research contracts from the various EU institutions and programs.

In addition to offering and facilitating competition for research contracts, EU institutions also provide untied funding to various organizations that are committed to the pursuit of the objectives of a given EU institution or the EU integration project more generally. Though not as ubiquitous as research contracts (in which EU institutions derive a clear, tangible result of their funding), EU bursaries allow supranational think-tanks to focus on the pursuit of publicly-beneficial aims without the added pressure of searching for funding to pursue these activities/outputs. Of course, supranational think-tanks are eager to compete for this funding, as it accords a significant degree of prestige to the recipient organization, while also allowing for full discretion of the think-tank as to how these funds are directed. Typically, this form of funding aligns with the priorities of the dispensing EU institutions at the time of offering, so supranational think-tanks which remain apprised and engaged with the most pressing policy issues at the time are typically best suited to be successful in the pursuit of this lucrative and desirable type of funding. It should be noted that, over the history of the dispersion of these funds, there has been a thematic trend toward those projects which are “designed to promote

cohesion—with a discourse of integration, inclusion, solidarity, partnerships and networking” (Benington and Harvey 1998, 159). Perhaps the clearest example of this type of funding is the European Commission’s *Europe for Citizens Programme* (European Commission 2016) which “is the result of the Commission’s reconsideration of EU governance following debate on the democratic deficit of the EU”; through this program, “EU think tanks have received funding from this action since its launch in 2007” (Perez 2014b, 155). Thus, untied funding offered by EU institutions, though not as readily available, allows supranational think-tanks to access significant funding without strict conditions upon how the funds must be used.

This section has demonstrated that supranational think-tanks do not typically rely on a single source of funding to sustain their operations. Instead, these organizations have demonstrated a push toward diversity of funding, and through this diversification ensuring that the withdrawal of a single source of funding would not jeopardize the longevity of the think-tank. In particular, supranational think-tanks have focused on four principal sources of funding to fulfill the majority of their annual expenses. First, these organizations rely heavily on annual enrolments and renewals to their membership, including both individual and organizational/institutional/corporate members. Fomenting a robust membership base allows think-tanks to benefit from the monetary gains associated with membership, while also establishing new audiences for the various dissemination efforts of a given think-tank. The second principal source of supranational think-tank funding stems from the various educational programming and other events they host, in which policy actors and organizations are convened under the auspices of a think-tank to engage with public policy topics in the EU. Third, corporate actors are particularly generous to supranational think-tanks, with corporate funding (beyond membership fees) comprising a significant fraction of these organizations’ operating budgets.

Yet, there is some question as to whether the ostensible reliance on corporate funding compromises the capacity of think-tanks to exist as independent centers of policy research, divorced from any interests that might skew the impartiality of a given think-tank. Finally, supranational think-tanks actively (and, to a large degree, successfully) seek and bid for funding from the various institutions of the EU. Through this funding, think-tanks are provided either tied or untied funds for the purposes of engaging in issues facing the EU (with a clear preference for the latter form of EU funding).

5.5 – Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide an analysis of the roles and functions that have been demonstrably embraced by supranational think-tanks in their (comparatively) brief existence. In particular, supranational think-tanks' roles were bifurcated into two categories: the establishment and interaction within policy networks and 'knowledge management.' The discussion of the policy networking capacity of supranational think-tanks was preceded by a consideration of what comprises the 'policy network' approach and framework, with particular attention to the two principal fault-lines within the scholarly literature on this approach: policy communities and issue networks. It was explained that policy communities typically comprise a small number of actors who, through negotiation and frequent interaction, are able to reach consensus based on their shared principles and values; issue networks, on the other hand, represent the antithesis to this form of policy network. Given the importance that network analysis has commanded by the literature on policy-making in the EU, and particularly the scholars who have considered supranational think-tanks' role therein, the main fault-lines and implications of network analysis were identified, as they relate specifically to the present analysis. It was demonstrated that, through their various activities and outputs, supranational

think-tanks engage in both forms of policy networks. In pursuing their policy networking function, supranational think-tanks demonstrate a propensity toward the hosting of debates and various conferences, seminars, and workshops to create, develop, and sustain policy networks at the EU level. Through these events, think-tanks are able to attract a wide variety of policy-relevant actors, with noteworthy presence of EU-level policy-makers and corporate actors. In supporting their ‘knowledge management’ role, supranational think-tanks focus on the production and dissemination of original research on European public policy issues, and the facilitation of educational programs centered on areas of the think-tank’s expertise and topical public policy relevance.

Following an identification and analysis of supranational think-tanks’ most prominent activities/outputs, there was consideration as to how these organizations finance their operations and various activities/outputs. It was revealed that supranational think-tanks rely on four main sources of funding. First, organizational and individual memberships—in which annual fees allow these organizations/individuals access to events, publications, or other benefits from the think-tank—comprise a significant portion of think-tanks’ budgets. Second, the programming and events think-tanks host serve as a significant source of funding. In particular, the facilitation of educational programming and workshops are particularly lucrative for supranational think-tanks, especially if speakers can be sourced internally and the events can be facilitated at the physical location of the think-tank. Third, supranational think-tanks rely heavily on their corporate members and supporters to provide additional financial resources beyond their annual membership fees. Here, the elitist school of thought can find significant ammunition, as it is easy to question the extent to which think-tanks can retain research independence and autonomy when they rely so heavily on financial incentives from corporations. Finally, and most interestingly

(and controversially), most supranational think-tanks could simply not operate without funding from the institutions of the EU, namely the European Commission and, increasingly, the European Parliament. Through the competition and bidding for lucrative research contracts from these institutions, supranational think-tanks complete original research and analysis on the major issues or questions plaguing these institutions, with monetary compensation in return. Once again, this form of funding can easily raise questions over the ostensible independence of supranational think-tanks, given the extent to which EU funding comprises the budgets of most of these organizations. In addition to research contracts, EU institutions further support supranational think-tanks through the dispersion of bursaries and untied funds on the basis of areas and priorities that are most pressing for these given institutions. Undoubtedly, this form of funding is the most desirable for supranational think-tanks, as they receive significant funds without any formal contributions or repayments in return. Clearly, then, supranational think-tanks operate with a diverse range of funding sources, yet funding from corporations and the institutions of the EU are likely a *sine qua non* for the operational longevity of most supranational think-tanks.

Unlike the previous consideration of the American think-tank environment, the considerably more contained supranational think-tank community has allowed for a narrowed discussion of what these organizations seek to do, and how they seek to fulfill this. Given that supranational think-tanks are primarily interested in the fomentation and fostering of policy networks and maintaining their ‘knowledge management’ role, the question now becomes how well these organizations fare in attaining these goals. Furthermore, of particular importance and emphasis for this dissertation’s purposes is the question of what benchmarks, quantitative and/or qualitative, are used for the purposes of gauging this success. Accordingly, the following chapter

will consider how supranational think-tanks have metricized and gauged their success, and the extent to which their standards of success have been marketed and used as a basis for cross-organizational comparison. In particular, it will become boldly apparent that the metrics, standards, and values associated with the success of think-tanks in the American and supranational contexts are markedly divergent.

CHAPTER 6: HOW DO SUPRANATIONAL THINK-TANKS GAUGE THEIR SUCCESS?

6.1 – Introduction

From the analysis and discussion within the previous chapter, it is readily apparent that supranational think-tanks devote a significant degree of their resources to fulfilling two principal roles: the creation and fostering of policy networks and, with demonstrably less emphasis, the embodiment of a ‘knowledge management’ role within the European public policy community. Particular attention was devoted to the activities and outputs which supranational think-tanks employ to facilitate these goals, yet there was (deliberately) scant mention of the means by which these organizations gauge their success in the fulfillment of their goals. The purpose of the immediate analysis, then, is to focus on the means through which supranational think-tanks evaluate their impact on the policy-making and public policy communities. By identifying the metrics and benchmarks supranational think-tanks employ, it will be possible to provide an informed comparison of the salient modes of evaluation between the supranational and American think-tank communities at a later point. It will become especially clear by the end of this analysis that there are significant differences in the approaches supranational and American think-tanks employ for evaluations of their respective ‘success.’

Though the present purpose is not to expose and analyze the defining differences between the American and supranational think-tank landscape, it would be beneficial to provide a brief consideration of what the ‘end game’ of supranational think-tanks is vis-à-vis their overarching *raison d’être*. Whereas previous analysis demonstrated that American think-tanks are preoccupied with impacting the policy-making process and shaping the discourse on American public policy issues, supranational think-tanks do not, through their primary activities and

outputs, suggest a desired emulation or pursuit of similar goals. So, without preempting the subsequent deep comparison of supranational and American think-tanks, it will nonetheless be posited that supranational think-tanks view their success primarily through their capacity to create and sustain policy networks among relevant actors and organizations in the European public policy community.

In the case of supranational think-tanks, it will be argued and demonstrated that supranational think-tanks have utilized two principal indicators of their success. First, supranational think-tanks have focused on their various events in formulating their perception of ‘success,’ involving a consideration of the diversity and quantity of events the given think-tank hosts. Second, the volume and quality of membership are critically important to evaluations of success for supranational think-tanks. For supranational think-tanks, these two particular benchmarks of success are comfortably situated within the ambit of the principal role they seek to fulfill, which is to say the creation and fostering of European-level policy networks. Further, the quantity and quality of think-tanks’ events and membership base is a product and indication of the extent to which supranational think-tanks are able to fulfill this network-driven role. Accordingly, supranational think-tanks focus on those metrics and indicators which are most capable of capturing the ability of these organizations to create and foster policy networks—as will be demonstrated, a focus on events and membership are representative of this aim.

Although supranational think-tanks have demonstrated a clear propensity toward the prioritization of their activities and outputs around those which contribute to their policy networking capacity (or the illusion thereof), it was also revealed in the preceding analysis that supranational think-tanks pursue a ‘knowledge management’ role. This role, while identifiably comparable to think-tanks operating in most other institutional contexts, does serve a pragmatic

purpose for supranational think-tanks beyond simply the pursuit of original research on European public policy issues. Specifically, it will be argued that supranational think-tanks leverage their ‘knowledge management’ role primarily for the purposes of providing a non-governmental and non-organizational source of revenue. The funding predicament plaguing the supranational think-tank community has required these organizations to pursue activities and outputs that will reap some form of ‘return on investment.’ In the case of ‘knowledge management,’ this aspect of supranational think-tanks is primarily geared toward the marketability of these outputs for eliciting further funding. Thus, the production and dissemination of original research and the facilitation of educational programming serve a pragmatic operational role, namely in their capacity to increase think-tank revenue.

This chapter will proceed in three principal stages. First, it will briefly identify how the underpinnings of policy network analysis (PNA) can be applied to the study of supranational think-tanks, specifically in terms of analyzing the ‘success’ thereof. Given the myriad approaches, assumptions, and interpretations associated with PNA, it is prudent to clarify the presuppositions and parameters that will be employed in the use of PNA vis-à-vis supranational think-tanks. Second, this analysis will naturally proceed to focus on those indicators of success that reflect the ability of supranational think-tanks to create and foster policy networks. Within this overarching goal of supranational think-tanks, two principal indicators of success will be identified and analyzed: events and membership. The employment of quantitative and qualitative indicators of success through various think-tank events will be elucidated, focusing on the aspects of their events and membership that are most abundantly highlighted and marketed by think-tanks. Further, it will be considered how supranational think-tanks have used their membership characteristics as a representation of success, once again from both a quantitative

and qualitative perspective. The third stage will demonstrate that the dominant function of ‘knowledge management’ activities and outputs rests within the ability of these activities/outputs to garner revenue for think-tanks. Thus, analysis will be focused on how supranational think-tanks use their ‘knowledge management’ function for pragmatic purposes, namely the solicitation of funding.

6.2 – What Does Policy Networking ‘Success’ Look Like?

The previous chapter introduced the general approach—and relevant constituent sub-approaches—that has been labeled as Policy Network Analysis (PNA). Specifically, the PNA sub-approaches of ‘policy communities’ and ‘issue networks’ were featured as particularly relevant to the study of think-tanks within a network-centric paradigm. Furthermore, throughout the present analysis, it will be argued that supranational think-tanks have primarily focused their evaluations and marketing of ‘success’ around the creation and cultivation of policy networks among the European public policy community. Such a task, however, is not easily captured by a statistical inference, nor is it identifiable by the congregation of a group of policy-relevant actors at a given think-tank’s event. Thus, the present analysis, in particular, faces an epistemological question that challenges the ability of scholars and analysts to gauge the efficacy of actors/organizations in interacting within networks.

Put simply, how can the networking capacity of supranational think-tanks be understood as successful? Further, how can a given supranational think-tank be more efficacious at policy networking than other think-tanks? Answering these questions is, unfortunately, not likely to yield definitive or universally satisfactory responses, nor is there a means of doing so without confronting the inherent difficulties in interacting with PNA approaches in an empirically useful capacity. As popular as PNA approaches might have become for political scientists over the last

several decades, it is perhaps possible that this popularity emanates from the reality that “there is no single policy network approach in public policy” (Skogstad 2005, 2). As such, within PNA “there is methodological and epistemological pluralism. Some scholars rely on qualitative methods to map policy communities/networks while others adopt more quantitative methods. Network analysts’ theories of human behaviour span rational actor, institutionalist, and constructivist approaches” (Skogstad 2005, 2). Throughout its history, PNA has been utilized in the form of a methodological approach, a metaphor of contemporary policy-making (Dowding 2005), and even as a theoretical paradigm with explanatory power (Carlsson 2000). It is necessary to clarify, then, through which prism PNA will be presently utilized and how ‘success’ might be gauged through this approach.

This chapter (and, by extension, this dissertation) avoids the more popular usage of PNA, which is to say the utilization of this approach for explaining an emergent model of governance or as a typology of interest mediation and intergovernmental bargaining and negotiation (Besussi 2006, 3). Instead, PNA is employed through a micro-level analysis of agency in PNA, focusing on the particular fulcrums of policy networking, which is to say the intermediaries in the creation and sustainment of policy networks. In other words, PNA is primarily viewed through the lens of the organizations that are the ‘sellers’ of policy networks (supranational think-tanks), and the concomitant ‘buyers’ (actors/organizations with some affiliation to a given think-tank). Thus, while many PNA-based analyses will focus their approach on processes—and will thus be a dynamic, kinetic analysis with many ‘moving parts’—this analysis seeks to understand policy networks through the static perspective of the facilitators of these networks, in this case supranational think-tanks. Thus, by placing supranational think-tanks at the center of the analysis of policy networking, it is possible to consider how policy networks are actually facilitated, as

opposed to a more popular consideration of their impact on policy and the implications for governance models. By avoiding analysis of policy networks vis-à-vis policy-making (though by no means questioning PNA's importance contemporary discussions of policy- and decision-making), it is prudent to consider the 'success' of policy networking from the 'providers' perspective. What, then, does a successful provider of policy networks do?

In simplest terms, a successful facilitator of policy networks is demonstrably capable of gathering individuals and organizations in a neutral environment that promotes discussion, debate, and provides the basis for further, enhanced connection and collaboration. Thus, from the perspective of supranational think-tanks, a successful policy networking function is fulfilled by their engagement of, through the myriad of fora, diverse and policy-relevant actors and organizations among the European public policy community. Accordingly, for the purposes of this analysis, the capacity for engaging actors/organizations is more important than whether or not these policy networks are successful in impacting the European policy-making process, or whether they represent tertiary providers of fora for networking among the public policy community. As will be demonstrated, supranational think-tanks are naturally occupied with demonstrating their policy networking capacity by focusing on their ability to provide a diverse and robust fora for an equally diverse and voluminous membership to partake in.

The means by which supranational think-tanks have sought to represent their fora and membership qualities that are most impressive will now be analyzed, as well as considering why think-tank activities/outputs that do not specifically further this goal are pursued and marketed by think-tanks. Furthermore, by focusing specifically on supranational think-tanks' creation and cultivation of policy networks, the major epistemological and ontological debates that have plagued PNA are side-lined, and thus do not distract from the main unit of analysis of present

analysis, which is to say supranational think-tanks. It will now be considered how supranational think-tanks have gauged their success in policy networking, as articulated through various representations of their events and membership.

6.3 – Supranational Think-Tanks and the Success of Policy Networking

While it has been demonstrated that supranational think-tanks devote a considerable degree of their resources to the creation and fomentation of policy networks, there are some obvious methodological impediments to identifying and positing the success of think-tanks, and other civil society groups, for that matter (Thatcher 1998, 393; Kenis and Schneider 1991, 48). Namely, it is difficult, if not impossible, to genuinely demonstrate a distinction between the existence of a policy network and simply the congregation of a number of independent actors in a similar physical space (Dowding 1995). In other words, the congregation and hosting of policy-relevant actors within think-tank fora does not immediately indicate the presence of a ‘policy community’ or ‘issue network,’ nor does it guarantee that such a network will inevitably result. Instead, such congregations of policy-relevant actors provide the basis for the *possibility* of a policy network to develop, and the difficulty emerges in identifying when such policy networks are present. The ability of scholars and analysts to identify policy networks is further complicated by the reality that “policy networks also differ in composition, tactics, and style” (Stone 2000, 37). It is important to qualify, then, that the identification of policy networks is subject to the presupposition that policy-relevant actors are themselves invested in their inclusion in policy networks, explicitly or otherwise. In other words, the presupposition that policy-relevant actors’ attendance and participation in think-tank fora is not simply educational or passive will necessarily be accepted. Instead, in a set of assumptions somewhat similar to that of a rational choice perspective, these actors are also engaging with supranational think-tanks for

the purposes of ensuring their inclusion in emergent or salient European policy networks. Such a view of actor/organizational desire to belong to a policy network has a strong basis in salient literature on policy network analysis (Coleman 1990; Knoke 1990; Burt 2001; Sandström and Carlsson 2008; Berardo 2009; Provan et al 2009; Berardo and Scholz 2010; Lubell et al 2012; Fischer 2013). Proceeding under the assumption that one of the reasons policy-relevant actors engage with supranational think-tanks is for the purposes of ensuring their inclusion in policy networks, the bases upon which supranational think-tanks evaluate their role in shaping these policy networks will now be considered.

6.3.1 – Gauging Success of Policy Networking

Identifying and analyzing supranational think-tanks' policy networking is important to understanding how—and how well—these organizations assert their relevance and importance to the European public policy community. As Stone suggests, “observing their policy network interactions provides insight into the manner think tanks penetrate informal political circles and acquire entrée and access to decision-makers” (Stone 2000, 38). As indicated through the present and preceding analysis, supranational think-tanks are primarily occupied with facilitating the creation and sustainment of policy networks within the European public policy community. However, it was also previously indicated that identifying the presence of ‘policy networks’ raises methodological issues for scholars searching for their presence, especially in particularly crowded policy-making or epistemic communities. It is unclear, for instance, when the congregation of a group of policy-relevant actors transcends this form of interaction and enters the realm of ‘policy network.’ Furthermore, if such a congregation does embody a policy network (or a sub-variation thereof), does that in itself constitute a ‘success’ for a supranational

think-tank, or does this network necessarily need to be heard and responded to by policy-makers for it to be considered ‘successful’? As Stone adds,

it is tempting to equate successful networking with influence. Yet the informal access that networking might afford does not mean that decision-makers pay attention to think tanks. Networks may generate intense activity that does not necessarily translate into policy. Careful analysis is required to distinguish instances where think tanks are providing real input into policy deliberation from those (more frequent) occurrences when they do not (Stone 2004, 14).

For Stone, then, there is a significant methodological leap that is required in distinguishing an informal congregation to a ‘policy network,’ making the identification of the latter difficult to substantiate. To draw an example from the supranational think-tank community, one of MEDEA’s explicit activities involves “informal meetings between different actors of the Mediterranean and Euro-Arab relations (officials, diplomats, businessmen, etc.) organized in order to increase the regularity of contacts and reduce the risk of misunderstandings and mutual incomprehension” (MEDEA 2016). Yet, if such informal meetings immediately precede an event or period of hostility or détente between these regions—broadly, and hypothetically, speaking—does this attribute causative agency to the think-tank?

Notwithstanding the methodological issues in identifying ‘policy networks,’ supranational think-tanks have identified aspects of their outputs and activities which contribute to the indication of their ability to create and sustain ‘policy networks.’ In gauging the success of their capacity to create and facilitate policy networks, supranational think-tanks have focused on two aspects of their activities and output in the demonstration of this goal. Namely, supranational think-tanks have focused on both qualitative and quantitative aspects of their events and membership as the primary means through which their policy networking capacity has been gauged. These benchmarks will now be elucidated in detail.

6.3.2 – ‘Events’ as Indicative of Policy Networks

Supranational think-tanks focus heavily on their various events and fora as a testament to their capacity to create and foment policy networks among the European-level public policy community. According to Perez’s appraisal of the pragmatic relevance of supranational think-tanks’ events, “as facilitators of platforms, think tanks seek to create spaces (seminars, workshops and conferences) in which a wide variety of policy actors come together to discuss policy problems in order to find solutions that fit the demands of the political system” (Perez 2014, 334). The most prominent and visible supranational think-tanks, without exception, provide some indication of their events and the actors who have been in attendance. For instance, the Chairman of EPC suggests that the think-tank “has continued to provide the ‘movers and shakers’ in Brussels with first-class policy debates and meetings” (EPC 2015, 4). In particular, however, supranational think-tanks have demonstrated a propensity to focusing on both quantitative and qualitative indicators of ‘success’ in evaluating their events. From a quantitative perspective, the number of attendees at these events and the number of overall events are central to think-tanks’ marketing of themselves as arbiters of policy networks. Qualitatively, supranational think-tanks have focused on the nature of the attendees at their events and the diversity of event-types, indicating a genuine concern of think-tanks in regulating the caliber of actors being integrated in policy networks under their aegis.

6.3.3 – Quantitative Indicators of Think-Tanks’ Events

Among supranational think-tanks, especially the most visible and financially successful, there is significant emphasis placed upon their ability to attract a large number of individuals and organizations to the various events they host throughout a given year. Empirically, Perez claims that the frequency of supranational think-tank events already “indicates that there is a constant

interest amongst policy actors and policymakers to participate in think-tank fora” (Perez 2014b, 150). Supranational think-tanks are keen to demonstrate and substantiate their visibility through attendance at their fora, not to mention benefit from the financial bolstering that is often associated with these events. After all, as Stephen Boucher notes (questionably, from this author’s perspective), “conferences are the main source of funding for several think tanks” (Boucher 2004, 30). Supranational think-tanks are also inclined to identify how the high visibility and occurrence of policy-relevant events fits within the broader goals of these organizations.

As a testament to the centrality of events for supranational think-tanks’ mandates, Bruegel suggests that its “ability to bring together real influencers means that our many events achieve a number of strategic goals: helping to set the policymaking agenda, exploring pragmatic solutions to policy impasses, [and] analysing the policy relevance of current economic research” (Bruegel 2015, 25). Furthermore, in a ‘by the numbers’ section of annual reports strikingly similar to tactics employed by American think-tanks in their annual reporting, many think-tanks include a numerical indication of how many events were hosted and by how many attendees. Some think-tanks, such as the EPC for example, include the hosting and continued expansion of their fora for interaction within the European public policy community as part of their mission statements. According to EPC, their principal goals include “[providing] a forum for discussion among all stakeholders in the European policy process,” and their commitment “to build collaborative networks of researchers, policy-makers and business representatives across the whole of Europe” (EPC 2015, 4). Furthermore, from year-to-year, supranational think-tanks are keen to market their increased attendance and number of events as indicative of their proliferated relevance and visibility among the Brussels public policy community. In a 2016 message from

the CEO of CEPS, Karel Lannoo, it is enthusiastically highlighted that “we [at CEPS] are gratified to report that attendance levels at our regular seminars and debates also remains very high, showing there is demand for well-informed debate about the myriad policy issues calling for action on a daily basis in Brussels” (CEPS 2016, 1). TEPSA, for its part, suggested that it “continued to cooperate with a large range of partners and interlocutors: from its own members and associate member institutes to diverse academia from outside the network in order to organise topical activities linked to the EU agenda” (TEPSA 2012, 3). Further, TEPSA added that it “continued to be pro-active in the organisation of conferences, roundtables, workshops, study visits, trainings, summer school, guest lectures etc in order to provide a stable framework for high quality research on European integration” (TEPSA 2012, 5). In another example, FEPS was keen to identify, in rather dramatic terms, how they “welcomed a huge gathering in Brussels, bringing together the Progressive movement for 3 days of political and cultural activities, including conferences, debates, workshops, music, literature cafés and key speeches from the European MEP and top candidates” (FEPS 2015, 8). Evidently, the volume of events (and concomitant attendees) a given supranational think-tank hosts represents an opportunity to assert relevance to policy-makers and the public policy community, as more interest in events indicates a value-added role played by the respective think-tank. Yet, it is not simply the number of events and attendees at these events that supranational think-tanks use as an indication of their success.

6.3.4 – Qualitative Indicators of Think-Tanks’ Events

Though supranational think-tanks demonstrate a clear interest in representing their event and programming success through quantitative indicators, there is also a demonstrable desire to substantiate impressive quantitative metrics with equally impressive qualitative indicators. In particular, supranational think-tanks have demonstrated qualitative event success through

representations of diversity in event formats and attendees. As such, supranational think-tanks seek to highlight the multiple formats in which their fora-providing functions are executed, alongside the extent to which event attendees are representative of the major policy-relevant interests in European public policy.

A diversity of events demonstrates that supranational think-tanks are comfortable facilitating debate and discussion in a variety of contexts and remain adaptable to situations involving both larger and smaller groups of actors. Bruegel openly identifies the benefits of its multiple fora for discussion and debate (not to mention the explicit policy networking intention), suggesting “different formats address different needs. Smaller meetings help inform our research while larger conferences offer space for debate and hold officials to account. Many events bring together parties that would not ordinarily have a chance to exchange ideas with each other” (Bruegel 2015, 25). Another example of the open marketing of the diversification of think-tank events can be found with Friends of Europe which, for example, highlights not just the diversity of their events, but also seek to differentiate themselves on the basis of their unconventional range of events. For example, it is suggested:

the formats of our events are unusual. At one end of the spectrum there are ‘Café Crossfire’ debates, in which leading experts and policymakers answer tough questions from the floor. At the other are major international conferences—‘Policy Summits’—that attract top political figures and make headlines. And we are pioneers in harnessing new technology to debating Europe’s future and its role in the world (Friends of Europe 2016).

Furthermore, supranational think-tanks also focus on the promotion of their events that are particularly apropos and beneficial for their membership. As Perez highlights, “EU think tanks in their function as facilitators of debate will tend to concentrate on the demands of partners, members and sponsors in order to attract the attention of actors that can enhance their authority, such as academics and certain public officials” (Perez 2014, 327). As a result of the continuation

and proliferation of membership in these organizations being fundamental to their operational longevity, presenting an impression of events which are tailored and targeted toward membership can be enticing for organizations to renew or join the membership of a given think-tank.

In addition to the diversity of events being held, supranational think-tanks highlight the varied group of actors that attend and participate in these events. By demonstrating a clear diversity of actors and organizations present at think-tanks' events and activities, several implications are being exuded from the think-tank. First, a diversity of actors provides evidence of a wide resonance that the given think-tank's approach, messages, or other associative characteristics has with a wide range of actors in European public policy. Second, a wide range of attendees and participants at think-tank events provides an indication that the subject matter or topics of analysis are not too parochial or provincial so as to dissuade non-experts from developing an interest in the discussions/debates. Finally, and on the opposite end of the spectrum of the previous point, a diversity of actors at think-tank events demonstrates that there is a degree of propriety inherent in these think-tank events; otherwise, attendees/participants would devote their resources (time and money, mostly) to those fora that are easier to access or comprehend. In other words, supranational think-tanks want to demonstrate that their events are attended by a range of policy-relevant actors that have identified the given think-tank as the most desirable venue for their engagement with European public policy discussions/debates. For example, TEPSA highlights "its capability to link academics, national bodies and citizens and European decision-makers," adding a geographically expansive element by suggesting "TEPSA's activities extend their scope well beyond the Brussels' arena, drawing especially on the multiplier effect inherent in all activities and fostering debate, action and mutual

understanding between the members who contribute to the implementation” (TEPSA 2012, 3). CEPS, in highlighting one of their more popular annual events, ‘The Ideas Lab,’ suggests this event “has allowed us to reach a broad audience of think tanks, governments, businesses and non-governmental organisations from across Europe” (CEPS 2015, 6). CEPS complements this broad engagement by suggesting that the “CEPS Ideas Lab provides an innovative platform of exchange among other think tanks and academics from across Europe, representatives of national governments, businesses, NGOs and European institutions to debate a range of policy issues for Europe” (CEPS 2015, 26).

While supranational think-tanks demonstrate a desire to show how their events are being attended by a broad range of actors, it is also clear that the specificities of speakers and debaters at events are of importance as well. In particular, and similar to a qualitative indicator of ‘influence’ adopted by American think-tanks, the prestige and recognition of particular speakers are marketed by supranational think-tanks as indicative of their clout within the Brussels public policy community. Accordingly, in annual reports and activity logs of supranational think-tanks, there is no absence of willingness to profile, prominently pictorialize, and publicize the most recognizable and prolific speakers and event participants. In this sense, then, supranational think-tanks are keen to emphasize both the diversity of their event participants alongside the specifically noteworthy speakers, debaters, and attendees at these events.

Overall, then, supranational think-tanks are actively interested in gauging success in their events through both quantitative and qualitative indicators. From a quantitative angle, supranational think-tanks highlight the number of attendees of their various events, as well as the number of these events that are taking place throughout any given year. In a harmonious concordance with the aforementioned approach to supranational think-tanks’ role, FEPS suggests

that it “continues to prove its value as a platform for debate and bridges the divide between the institutions and Europe’s citizens. Our network is growing consistently we are reaching out to more people with each activity and we are improving the calibre of our work. This is recognised in the people involved and the quantity and quality of our activities” (FEPS 2015, 11).

6.3.5 – ‘Membership’ as Indicative of Policy Networks

In addition to supranational think-tanks’ emphasis on quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the events they host, these organizations also place considerable weight upon the nature of their membership base. Supranational think-tanks rely heavily on annual memberships, both individual and organizational—the latter, however, represent a significantly more lucrative and larger share of funding for think-tanks. Thus, supranational think-tanks have a clear incentive to make themselves as hospitable and lucrative for organizations seeking to offer their resources to civil society actors. Accordingly, supranational think-tanks do not shy away from a recognition of the importance of organizational donors, as will become evident throughout this section. However, supranational think-tanks do not highlight their membership characteristics simply as a ‘bookkeeping’ exercise. Instead, think-tanks utilize their membership base as a recruitment tool for further membership contributions and as a testament to their eminence as policy network facilitators among the most prominent echelons of the European public policy community. In marketing their membership base in annual reports and other marketing materials, supranational think-tanks highlight elements representing both the quantity and quality of their membership, with an asymmetrical degree of emphasis on the latter over the former.

6.3.6 – *Quantitative Indicators of ‘Membership’*

From a quantitative standpoint, supranational think-tanks seek to highlight the number of members that belong to the given think-tank, along with the number of members in different categories of membership, if applicable. Typically, supranational think-tanks that rely especially heavily on membership fees for their annual revenue will offer escalating categories of membership, particularly for corporate memberships. As Perez notes, “businesses are an important source of funding for think tanks, including EU think tanks,” and accordingly they “offer businesses privileged access to activities and outputs in return for membership dues” (Perez 2014b, 161). Naturally, as the prestige and advertised benefits of the particular membership ‘level’ increases, so too does the concomitant cost of membership therein; in some cases, the cost of the highest (publicly advertised) annual membership level can reach €30,000 in the case of one prominent supranational think-tank (CEPS 2015, 27). For this highest membership level, for example, organizational members “can discuss their special interests directly with CEPS experts,” and “may request individualised briefing sessions for their board members or top management” (CEPS 2015, 27), among a host of other benefits. In this sense, such a membership package flirts dangerously close to the mandates and activities of consultancies and lobby groups, the distinction of which might become increasingly blurred (Boucher 2004, 97; Abelson 2006, 128; Stone 2007, 264), especially as the level/status of membership increases. The EPC, for its part, even explicitly offers the “opportunity to access and influence key EU actors” (EPC 2015, 18) for their corporate members. Clearly, then, the EPC is confident in its ability to expose its membership to the most important levers of power in EU policy-making. It is not surprising, then, that the highest levels of memberships for think-tanks are typically composed of large multi-national corporations or Brussels-based

international/member state diplomatic missions to the EU. Despite the quick appeal that might be offered in designating supranational think-tanks as disguised lobbyists or spokespersons for European corporations, it is perhaps more important to focus on the primary, and most important role, that corporations play for supranational think-tanks: a significant source of funding. Thus, notwithstanding the cynical and elitist overtones that have been conveyed throughout elements of her work, Stone nonetheless believes “the corporate interest in expanding programmes, raising funds, publishing more books, securing media coverage and political patronage, and so forth, are essential to organizational sustainability and growth, as well as to the protection of jobs” (Stone 2007, 270). Most supranational think-tanks will, as part of their annual report or through other internal publications, provide a list or indicate the most generous organizational and corporate donors (think-tanks will rarely identify individual members, and many think-tanks do not even provide the option for individual memberships). While supranational think-tanks are certainly able to demonstrate visibility and credibility through a robust membership list, these organizations are more interested in revealing and highlighting the qualitative aspects of their membership, which will now be considered.

6.3.7 – Qualitative Indicators of ‘Membership’

Though it is clear that supranational think-tanks highlight the quantitative aspects to their membership base, considerably more emphasis is placed upon the qualitative characteristics of their membership’s composition, and the purported benefits that are derived from membership in a given think-tank. In particular, supranational think-tanks focus on the diversity of their membership, the ostensible power and influence of their membership in EU policy-making, and the ability of the think-tank to facilitate interaction between all of these policy-relevant actors.

Because supranational think-tanks rely on membership fees for a significant component of their annual revenue, it is strategically disadvantageous for these organizations to appeal only to a small segment of the civil society and corporate communities. Accordingly, supranational think-tanks are keen to expose and posit their utility to a diverse and non-uniform group of organizations and actors invested in European public policy processes and outcomes, culminating in the case for funding. Though writing with a predominant American focus, Andrew Selee has produced what might be understood as a ‘how-to’ for think-tanks and aspiring think-tank founders. In reflecting on the importance of appeasing membership, Selee suggests “membership organizations usually will be highly sensitive to their members’ wishes and look for ways to develop programming that engages them as well as informs the general public” (Selee 2013, 38). As has been demonstrated thus far, and will be further corroborated, this is an accurate depiction of how supranational think-tanks engage with their membership. Accordingly, seeking an ever-expanding membership roster impacts supranational think-tanks’ marketing stratagem by inclining these organizations to demonstrate the broad range of actors and organizations involved with the respective think-tank, thereby indicating a receptive and efficacious opportunity for organizations of all types. Through this logic, then, the more actors and organizations a given think-tank’s membership covers, the more likely other non-member organizations are to contemplate the benefits of think-tank membership for their organization. Demonstrably, many supranational think-tanks attract corporate and organizational membership from an eclectic group of organizations. CEPS, for example, attracts “membership fees from a wide variety of corporate and institutional sponsors” (CEPS 2015, 29), while the EPC acknowledges that their “membership brings together a wide variety of stakeholders – from major companies, professional and business associations, foundations, civil society groups,

diplomatic missions and regional associations – to help shape its input into the issues dominating the EU agenda (EPC 2015, 19). Further, the European Ideas Network (EIN) promotes that,

with an active membership of around 3000 policy-makers and opinion-shapers across the European Union, the EIN brings together politicians, businessmen, academics, policy advisers, think tankers [sic], journalists and representatives of civil society who share a common outlook Europe-wide, as well as outside non-party experts and commentators interested in the public policy issues being addressed (EIN 2016).

Even the more parochial supranational think-tanks—in which there are clear biases in topics or regions/relationships of expertise and focus—are inclined to highlight the diversity of their membership. The European Corporate Governance Institute (ECGI), for example, declares “we provide a forum for debate and dialogue between academics, legislators and practitioners, focusing on major corporate governance issues and thereby promoting best practice,” adding to their impression of relevance by suggesting that “we maintain close links with all its institutional members and other organisations that are active in the field” (ECGI 2016). Furthermore, the fundamentally regionalist supranational think-tank, European Institute for Research on Mediterranean and Euro-Arab Cooperation (MEDEA), openly acknowledges that “its work consists in developing a network of continuous dialogue between politicians, economists and academics, and in making available to the general public, information relating to relations that Europe has with its southern neighbours” (MEDEA 2016)—‘southern neighbors,’ in the European context, represents a particularly wide and inclusive geographical ambit.

However, supranational think-tanks do not just strive to provide evidence of a well-represented membership catalogue from civil society and corporate actors in Europe—indeed, they benefit from it. Not only does a wide variety of organizational members denote an indication and impression of visibility and efficacy across European civil society and corporate communities, but such variety allows think-tanks to benefit from articulations of the diversified

input and priorities from these member organizations. It is not the case that all European corporations and non-governmental organizations share a similar set of preferences or ideal-types for the future of Europe (Wen 2013, 55), and think-tanks can benefit from this difference of opinion by integrating these divergences into the various events and debates that are hosted. Given the extent to which supranational think-tanks require continued membership (and proliferation thereof) to remain operationally sound, it is not surprising that many of their events and activities are tailored to both benefit these organizations, as well as address some of the points of contention and divergence among them (without explicitly ostracizing factions, of course). As Perez suggests, in the case of supranational think-tanks, they “target different audiences and, to maintain the resources they need in order to operate, depend on different types of public, which makes it difficult for them to assemble a specific constituency” (Perez 2014, 326). Furthermore, supranational think-tanks benefit from a diversity in membership through the welcoming of specific, ‘insider’ knowledge from actors and organizations in EU public policy. According to Ullrich, in referencing the networking capacity of EU think-tanks, “transnational networks allow EU think tanks to gain broader perspectives on European issues and incorporate different approaches to EU policy issues” (Ullrich 2004, 61). Certain scholars working from a policy networking approach have agreed that this collaboration among diverse, largely non-governmental policy-relevant actors is indeed necessary for contemporary decision-making processes (Berardo and Scholz 2010; Henry 2011; Fischer 2013). In short, then, supranational think-tanks benefit from a wide representation of interests and groups within the EU, and attention is taken to ensure that this diversity is marketed and utilized to further attract organizations toward membership.

In addition, supranational think-tanks seek to associate their membership with the ‘movers and shakers’ of the Brussels policy-making community. By identifying their membership as representative of the European public policy community elite, the given think-tank is then able to mortgage this impression as indicative of the efficacy of the given think-tank in congregating influential and powerful policy-relevant actors to discuss and debate matters facing the EU. For example, according to the EPC, “the EPC’s membership brings together a wide variety of stakeholders – from major companies, professional and business associations, foundations, civil society groups, diplomatic missions and regional associations – to help shape its input into the issues dominating the EU agenda” (EPC 2015, 19). Further, in a more explicit sense, the EPC’s Chairman, Poul Skytte Christoffersen, suggests “[the EPC] has continued to provide the ‘movers and shakers’ in Brussels with first-class policy debates and meetings” (EPC 2015, 4). Clearly, the EPC is keen to publicize the extent to which elite discussions and debates are facilitated under the aegis of the think-tank, developing the impression that the major policy debates in the EU are not confined solely to the decision-making institutions of the EU.

Such a desire to engage with the most influential and recognizable figures in the European public policy community fuels the notion, for better or worse, that “think tanks cater primarily to the economically and politically literate and are at some distance from the rest of society” (Stone 2007, 269). Though not directly targeted to the supranational think-tank community, Stone continues to build an ardent elitist interpretation of the conformity think-tanks have acquiesced into, resulting from their funders. As Stone elaborates,

the people who found these institutes and the people who work in them are usually highly educated, male, middle-class, Westernized professionals, often from privileged backgrounds. The organizational mandates—to inform and/or influence public policy—drives them to engage with other usually more powerful elites in society. Those sponsored and funded by international organizations and donor groups tend to be well

institutionalized, mainstream institutes whose research agendas concord in considerable degree with the policy interests of their funding source (Stone 2007, 269).

Such an area of inquiry is beyond the scope of the present analysis, but its applicability to supranational think-tanks remains interesting to contemplate nonetheless. Bruegel, the supranational think-tank with perhaps the most noticeable economic bent to its ambit of research and area of expertise, notes that “[its] distinctive nature rests in a balanced partnership between private and public stakeholders,” expanding that “our member base is composed of EU member states, international corporations and independent institutions” (Bruegel 2015, 51). By identifying a diverse, well-connected, and established membership base, supranational think-tanks are able to suggest that “this implies that policy actors financially support think tanks because their work is somehow useful to them” (Perez 2014, 335).

In addition to the particularly influential demographic that supranational think-tanks seek to highlight within their membership rosters, these organizations emphasize that membership within a given supranational think-tank is not (or, rather, does not have to be) a passive, philanthropic exercise in ‘cheque-writing.’ Instead, supranational think-tanks pinpoint precise positive externalities that policy-interested/relevant organizations can derive from think-tank membership, such as through networking opportunities among the membership. As Perez articulates, “an examination of the wide range of policy actors participating in [supranational think-tanks’] events indicates that, by bringing together EU officials, academics and national and local agencies, EU think tanks are providing a space where multiple key perspectives on EU polity are disseminated” (Perez 2014, 335). Recalling that corporate and organizational membership is the most financially lucrative membership category for supranational think-tanks, there is a clear incentive for think-tanks to offer tangible means through which these corporations/organizations can extract demonstrable benefit. For example, in an annual bid to

‘sell’ their corporate membership options through their annual report, CEPS, qualifying that “EU policies and regulations have a profound impact on the operating environment of global companies invested in Europe” (CEPS 2015, 27), suggests a remedy through their corporate membership. According to CEPS, then,

corporate membership at CEPS provides companies with a steady flow of original insights, authoritative studies, a platform for balanced debate on topics in their area of interest, and priority invitations to a wide range of events with an EU policy focus. CEPS Corporate Members also have the opportunity to debate directly with EU decision-makers, in both formal and informal settings, to bring their views to the policy-making process (CEPS 27).

For CEPS, then, their comparative advantage for luring corporate funders rests in their ability to provide timely updates on public policy matters in the EU and, importantly, their ability to connect corporate donors with formal policy-makers within the EU. In this sense, CEPS plays a strong intermediary and networking role in which corporate actors are introduced to policy-makers and provided with a neutral, collegial forum for discussion and debate. Friends of Europe, given its unapologetic titular designation as a pro-European think-tank, emphasizes their ability to engage a wide range of actors in the European public policy community, as opposed to the more corporate-driven constituency CEPS targets. For example, Friends of Europe claims that “senior government officials, elected politicians and the international media are invited as guests. For companies, diplomatic missions and NGOs, membership of Friends of Europe is a genuine opportunity to become involved in European affairs at the highest level” (Friends of Europe 2016). The EPC provides a similar standpoint on their interaction with their organizational funders, suggesting “the EPC remains committed to multi-stakeholder dialogue,” further adding that the think-tank will “look forward to engaging with members from across the spectrum, as well as our many other partners on the great questions facing Europe, and society more generally, and to working together to find solutions that can help the EU to grow and

prosper” (EPC 2015, 5). The institutions of the EU are, furthermore, able to theoretically garner benefits from participating and interaction in fora under the aegis of supranational think-tanks, as they are with broader civil society in Brussels (European Commission 2001; Sabel and Zeitlin 2008, 276; Kohler-Koch 2009, 48). As Perez suggests, “by participating in think tank fora, EU institutions can demonstrate their intention to seek out alternative spaces in which to exchange information and mitigate the risk of state capture. Moreover, EU institutions can show their engagement with the principles of transparency and participation associated with the adopted approach to governance” (Perez 2014b, 149). As these examples demonstrate, supranational think-tanks highlight the opportunity for organizations to interact with high-level policy-makers in the EU under the aegis of the particular think-tank—fulfilling, as the UNDP suggests, the notion that think-tanks “are the bridge between knowledge and power in modern democracies” (UNDP 2003, 6).

6.4 – Supranational Think-Tanks and the Success of ‘Knowledge Management’

Clearly, supranational think-tanks devote much of their resources to creating and fostering the development of effective policy networks among the European public policy community. However, despite the overwhelming emphasis supranational think-tanks place on policy networking, it was also highlighted that these organizations produce outputs and activities which fall into the category of ‘knowledge management.’ Yet, it is qualitatively clear that supranational think-tanks do not explicitly utilize their ‘knowledge management’ activities and outputs in facilitating their networking-centric roles in any significant capacity. Given that financially precarious organizations—such as think-tanks—cannot devote resources to activities and outputs which do not promote the fulfillment of their mandate, it is logical to suggest that supranational think-tanks extract some benefit from the publication of original research and

facilitation of educational programming, in particular. As Perez suggests, “when knowledge management is not a major function, think tanks will be mainly reactive, focusing on topics in which expertise is easily acquired, require only a small staff, and conduct customised research that ensures direct benefits” (Perez 2014, 331). As this and the preceding analysis has demonstrated, Perez’s description of think-tanks with minimal ‘knowledge management’ investment can easily be applied to supranational think-tanks. The question, of course, is why supranational think-tanks pursue ‘knowledge management’ activities/outputs at all, when it has been established that this function is a demonstrably tertiary component to the overall objective and *raison d’être* of supranational think-tanks. This question will now be addressed directly.

From the previous analysis to present, it has become feasible to posit that supranational think-tanks treat their ‘knowledge management’ activities and outputs within an explicitly transaction-based, cost-benefit mindset. In other words, supranational think-tanks shape their ‘knowledge management’ outputs/activities primarily as revenue-raising tools. While it is true that think-tanks within and beyond the EU focus their broader efforts on presenting activities and outputs to attract new and renewed funding to the organization, the more ethereal and long-term ambitions of many think-tanks do not necessarily bode particularly well for attracting short-term financial robustness. For example, ‘shaping the public policy discourse’—a common aspiration of think-tanks around the world (or some variation thereof)—is not easily translatable into immediate, short-term tangible indicators of success that a particularly pragmatic donor might look for in their philanthropic contributions. However, the sale of a think-tank-published monograph or the registration fees associated with educational programming, on the other hand, provide an immediate revenue-raising, transactional relationship between think-tanks and the policy-making community, not to mention the broader public. Further, the pursuit of transaction-

based ‘knowledge management’ activities/outputs allows think-tanks to tailor these toward their membership, prospective donors, or other actors/groups that might be particularly interested in the work of a given think-tank. As Perez suggests, “the knowledge management function of EU think tanks will mainly focus on customised knowledge management that ensures direct benefits” (Perez 2014, 326). Accordingly, then, it is posited that supranational think-tanks primarily use their ‘knowledge management’ functions to explicitly pursue revenue-raising without contributing to their institutional priorities from more of a policy impact or public narrative standpoint. Thus, ‘knowledge management’ activities and outputs are used to supplement, sustain, and ensure the operational possibility for the pursuit of network-related activities and outputs.

It should be clarified, however, that this is not to suggest that the pursuit of policy networking by supranational think-tanks is done with absent concern over the financial implications of this activity. While the creation and facilitation of policy networks does not immediately represent a revenue-positive activity for supranational think-tanks, the implications of policy networks in terms of membership and event attendance does offer an indication that think-tanks are benefitting financially from their networking role. In other words, while supranational think-tanks might not facilitate policy networking for the sake of directly impacting their short-term revenue stream, it is nevertheless the case that these activities can indirectly support the financial health of the organization. Though the process through which supranational think-tanks might derive positive revenue effects from policy networks is circuitous, the sale of a think-tank-published work or participation in a think-tank’s educational program provides immediate revenue-positive effects. Thus, it is not being suggested that policy networking does not positively impact revenue-raising aspirations of supranational think-tanks;

however, the explicit function of ‘knowledge management’ is to bolster the financial and, thus, operational health of the given think-tank. Yet, the picture still remains unclear. Namely, of the various outputs and activities supranational think-tanks can pursue to financially support their operations, why do they overwhelmingly rely on the publication of scholarly works and the facilitation of educational programming? These deliberate and, as will be demonstrated, strategic decisions supranational think-tanks have undertaken in fulfilling their ‘knowledge management’ function will now be considered more fully.

While supranational think-tanks focus overwhelmingly on their policy networking function, the use of publications and educational programming as revenue-raising tools is not without benefits to think-tanks themselves beyond just a revenue-raising function. Specifically, it is evident that the sale of publications also allows supranational think-tanks to augment their scholastic credibility, while the facilitation of educational programming provides think-tanks with a similar credibility-enhancing function, but with a particularly low internal cost to think-tanks themselves. In highlighting the publications emanating from a given supranational think-tank, supranational think-tanks are able to positively enhance the public’s impression and image of these organizations as encouraging scholastic-driven research and analysis of EU public policy issues/themes. Furthermore, supranational think-tanks are able to mortgage their academic credibility (through the visibility of their ‘knowledge management’ outputs) in their pursuit of research contracts from the institutions of the EU. By demonstrating a research profile and the capacity to produce original research on European matters, supranational think-tanks are able to provide these institutions with concrete evidence of their suitability for carrying out research on behalf of the EU. Because these research contracts can be generous in their funding and discretion in conclusions, pursuing ‘knowledge management’ roles can induce a positive

feedback loop for think-tanks pursuing funding from the institutions of the EU. Especially given the extent to which supranational think-tanks rely on EU institutional funding, these organizations have a vested financial interest in maintaining an active research output, despite a comparatively low internal prioritization of this research function. Thus, although the production and dissemination of original research is not a dominant priority for supranational think-tanks, the public, private, and supranational government's impression of these organizations as existing at the forefront of policy debates and expertise is only enhanced by the production and dissemination of original research. Accordingly, in bolstering their image through means resembling the stratagem of the 'universities without students' model of think-tank (Troy 2012, 76), supranational think-tanks actively market their publications not just as a revenue-raising tool, but also as a testament to their credibility as scholarly, expert-driven actors in the European public policy community.

Just as the marketing of supranational think-tanks' publications can be seen as a means for enhancing the public and membership's impression of the organization's scholastic credibility, so too can educational programming be seen as credibility-enhancing. However, unlike the resource costs (financial, time, etc.) required for the publication, marketing, and dissemination of think-tank research, facilitating educational programming provides these organizations with a considerably lower cost in pursuit of the same outcome, notwithstanding the primary motive of revenue-raising: credibility. Educational programming sponsored and hosted by supranational think-tanks allows these organizations to assert their expertise in a given European public policy area (or European public policy, more generally) and demonstrate their capacity to disseminate this knowledge and expertise to a wide group of actors and organizations with varying degrees of expertise. Thus, the facilitation of educational programming serves as an

indication that a given supranational think-tank possesses valuable knowledge and expertise that, through dissemination, is worth the (typically sizable) price tag these programs command. Furthermore, given that supranational think-tanks typically host these events and programs within their physical locations in Brussels (or, much less commonly, partner institutions elsewhere), overhead costs for the physical space required for these programs are low. Additionally, scholars and personnel from the hosting think-tank are typically featured as the speakers/facilitator of these events, thereby leading to the avoidance of costs associated with contracting-out speakers from elsewhere to provide the educational aspect to these programs. Thus, from a financial perspective, supranational think-tanks are able to provide educational programming at minimal cost to the organization itself, provided that speakers and the physical location fall within the respective think-tank's realm.

Notwithstanding their ability to enhance the credibility of their organizations, scholastic publications and educational programming are primarily purposeful to supranational think-tanks for the 'price-tags' they are able to attach to these products and services. As demonstrated previously, given that supranational think-tanks face a funding environment defined by modesty and deterministic allocations of resources (in the case of EU institutional research contracts, for example), opportunities for revenue-raising are necessarily pursued by think-tanks in the aim of securing and bolstering their operational capacity. In short, then, supranational think-tanks pursue 'knowledge management' activities and outputs primarily for their lucrative capacity to attract untied funding. However, in the case of supranational think-tanks, scholarly publications and educational programming have been utilized for their credibility-enhancing capacity as well.

6.5 – Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to identify and analyze the means by which supranational think-tanks gauge their success. Building upon the previous analysis, in which these think-tanks' roles and functions were elucidated, it became evident that think-tanks roles and evaluators of success were intimately related. In other words, there was alignment between the principal activities and priorities of these organizations and the extent to which these activities/outputs were utilized as benchmarks for evaluating their success. As such, the goal of supranational think-tanks to create and sustain 'policy networks' was reflected through the activities they pursue to fulfill this goal. Similarly, the 'knowledge management' function of these organizations, though less salient to supranational think-tanks, was evaluated on the basis of the main activities/outputs used to pursue this role. In particular, supranational think-tanks evaluate their 'policy network' function through two main aspects: events and membership. Since these organizations rely so heavily on their membership for financial security, and their membership are the principal demographics in attendance and targeting for think-tank events, it is unsurprising that these two aspects of policy networking are the principal benchmarks that these organizations are keen to inflate and market to the public, policy-relevant actors/organizations, and prospective organizational/corporate members.

In highlighting their events, supranational think-tanks emphasize both quantitative and qualitative aspects. Quantitatively, the frequency of events is often trumpeted by these organizations, as well as attendance therein. The ability to regularly draw respectable-sized crowds to multiple events is a testament to think-tanks' visibility and broad appeal across the European public policy community. From a qualitative perspective, supranational think-tanks highlight indications of diversity in event formats and attendees as contributing to their ability to

foster policy networks. Particularly, supranational think-tanks seek to highlight the multiple formats in which their fora-providing functions are executed, alongside the extent to which event attendees are representative of the major policy-relevant interests in European public policy. In addition to qualitative and quantitative aspects of events, the same dualistic approach is taken toward consideration of supranational think-tanks' membership. Supranational think-tanks' proliferation of membership indicates not just a concomitant increase to organizational revenue, but also suggests an increasing visibility and appeal of these organizations to a larger number of policy-relevant actors. Further, a demonstration of increased diversity in think-tanks' membership indicates a wider embracement of the value in a think-tank's efforts and principles, and the ability of a wide range of interests to be successfully represented, articulated, and overall enhanced by a given think-tank.

After identifying the major benchmarks and standards against which 'policy network' functions are evaluated, the analysis then shifted to consideration of how the indicators of 'knowledge management' are framed within supranational think-tanks' appraisals of their 'success.' It was importantly determined that the main instruments of 'knowledge management'—scholarly publications and educational programming—are primarily used as revenue-raising vehicles. However, supranational think-tanks are able to frame these two activities as credibility-enhancing, thus allowing these organizations to derive monetary benefit while simultaneously enhancing their academic credibility among the public policy community.

Contrasted with the similarly-goaled section on American think-tanks, it is clear that supranational think-tanks envision their mandates, and standards of fulfillment thereof, through markedly different terms. The hyper-competitive, media-savvy, quantitative metric-obsessed caricature of the American think-tanks community is very observably contrasted to a think-tank

environment in the EU that, perhaps deliberately, appears to reject the American model of think-tank function and stratagem—a rejection that might, *prima facie*, seem unequivocally wholesale. Yet, for all their divergences and asymmetries, supranational and American think-tanks are derivatives of the same organizational categorization from external observers, however genuine and warranted such a marriage might be. Without an explicit comparative element thus far, it is nonetheless clear and apparent that supranational and American think-tanks do, and do not, resemble each other in many ways.

Are supranational think-tanks an adopted child among an otherwise bountiful group of similar siblings? Or are supranational think-tanks, though a product of the same lineage, ‘just different’ than their siblings? Do supranational think-tanks belong, or even desire to belong, in the same family, adopted or otherwise? These questions will now become the focus of the successive chapters, in which attention will shift to the unanswered questions—unasked questions, to be precise—that are central to understanding why, despite a near-universal acclamation and hegemony of the American think-tank model, supranational think-tanks are the outliers to an otherwise ubiquitous ‘rule.’

CHAPTER 7: HOW DO AMERICAN AND SUPRANATIONAL THINK-TANKS DIFFER?

7.1 – Introduction

For all that American and supranational think-tanks might ostensibly have in common, their divergences in form and function overshadow any resemblance these two organizational models have to each other. Much of the previous analysis has been dedicated to understanding how American and supranational think-tanks operate in isolation, with little attention as to what factors might underlie the divergences of think-tanks in these two geo-institutional contexts. The rest of this analysis then will be directed to reconciling the gap that separates the American and supranational think-tank models. Comparing these two think-tank models does not lend well to a linear explanation, but instead involves a multifarious interrogation of the various factors—internal and external—that have fostered these divergences. Accordingly, the comparative approach of this study involves three principal stages, framed pragmatically as three simple questions (though, admittedly, with far from simple answers). The first question will be addressed within this chapter, while the following chapter will consider the subsequent two questions.

First, how do American and supranational think-tanks differ? While the previous chapters considered the roles, ambitions, and metrics of success that American and supranational think-tanks have employed, it has not been identified explicitly how these differences manifest themselves across these two organizational types. Second, why are American and supranational think-tanks different? Here, two main explanatory factors will be posited to demonstrate why American and supranational think-tanks have pursued divergent trajectories. First, the institutional arrangements that have regulated the opportunities and constraints for both think-tank models will be considered, with particular emphasis on the institutional receptiveness of the

EU policy-making system to civil society input and interaction. Second, it will be demonstrated that the political cultures of the US and EU have similarly defined the ambit of appropriateness that these organizations adhere to in executing their roles and priorities. The third question will center on what implications can be extracted from ‘how’ and ‘why’ American and supranational think-tanks are differentiated. This study will focus primarily on the implications that these differences have had upon competition, incentives for original research, and collaboration between other think-tanks (vertically and horizontally) in the American and supranational think-tank communities.

7.2 – How do American and Supranational Think-Tanks Differ?

Even when viewed in isolation, it is abundantly clear that American and supranational think-tanks represent two markedly different approaches to the ontological role and nature these organizations fulfill, and normatively ought to fulfill. From both the fundamental aspirations to the preponderance of certain specific types of funding mechanisms over others, supranational and American think-tanks might *prima facie* resemble each other in little more than title. Yet, for both these think-tank environments, a visit to any given Washington or Brussels-based think-tank’s webpage might not reveal any particular schism (at least to the scale that has, and will be, argued throughout this analysis). Thus, both of these think-tank environments share commonalities and divergences, with some being more superficial, and others more foundational. It is therefore possible to construct two different models of think-tanks on the basis of these divergences. The goal of utilizing a ‘model approach’ is to extract the major traits of these think-tank environments that can cross geo-institutional borders; in other words, a genuine think-tank model should be able to be replicated in other institutional contexts, or at least have the possibility of replication. The present challenge, then, is to identify the principal components that

might be distinctly representative of supranational and American think-tank models. What benefits are provided by attempting to present American and supranational think-tanks as ‘models’? First, identifying two distinct models of think-tanks will allow the preceding analysis and discussion to become more ‘neatly-packaged.’ Whereas the previous discussion and analysis aspired to enter a deep analysis of these two think-tank environments independently, it will be especially helpful to synthesize this analysis into more of a parsimonious, distinguishable typology. Second, especially in the case of supranational think-tanks, delineating among think-tanks on the basis of their most distinguishable traits will allow for further comparisons between these think-tank models and others in future research. Furthermore, articulating an identifiable and distinct supranational think-tank ‘model’ will allow the study of these particular organizations to adopt a more visible role within the broader think-tank literature.

This section will analyze three main macro-level differences that exist between supranational and American think-tanks, with constituent elements for each. Namely, the roles, priorities, and relationships between stakeholders.

7.3 – The Roles of American and Supranational Think-Tanks

One of the fundamental differences between the American and supranational think-tank models rests in their divergent roles—roles that naturally elicit different priorities that they pursue. In particular, it is posited that while American think-tanks pursue an advocacy-oriented role, supranational think-tanks are primarily interested in playing a networking-oriented role within the European public policy community.

7.3.1 – What role do American think-tanks pursue?

Before understanding the present role of American think-tanks, it is important to qualify that the contemporary American think-tank model is not emblematic of the history of these organizations. Instead, the relatively lengthy history of think-tanks in the US has witnessed a significant evolution in their roles, ultimately providing a think-tank model that might not have been recognizable to think-tanks in the early 20th century, or even up to the mid-point of the century for that matter. The purpose of this study is not to re-examine the historiography of literature and evolution of earlier American think-tanks, as this has already been sufficiently documented by scholars, and would thus not enhance the main original contribution of this study.⁶ Yet, it should be stated that, prior to the early 1970s, the advocacy-centrism of contemporary American think-tanks was a rare exception to an otherwise scholarly-focused ‘rule.’ Thus, although the present American think-tank model is preoccupied primarily with pursuing an advocacy-oriented role, this characteristic has only come to be one of the defining traits of American think-tanks since the early 1970s (Abelson 2009, 20). Even more specifically, some scholars have gone so far as to suggest that the founding and early years of the Heritage Foundation was a ‘baptism by fire’ for American think-tanks’ experience in trading a more academic role for a more involved role in topical public policy debates (Troy 2012, 81). As Troy suggests, the founders of The Heritage Foundation—Ed Feulner and Paul Weyrich—“hatched the notion of a new think tank that would see as its mission the development of serious policy research to advance a broadly conservative agenda” (Troy 2012, 79). Even further, a former Treasury Secretary went so far as to claim anecdotally: “I know this from personal experience,

⁶ For exceptionally strong analyses of the evolution of American think-tanks, see Abelson 2009 (Chapter 1), McGann 2007 (Chapter 3), and Troy (2012).

Heritage reshaped the world of think tanks and Washington policymaking” (Miller and Zinsmeister 2015). Today, advocacy is central to American think-tank survival; as Richard Haass suggests, “these institutions focus as much on advocacy as research, aiming to generate timely advice that can compete in a crowded marketplace of ideas and influence policy decisions” (Haass 2002).

Having understood that American think-tanks have moved away from a distinctly scholarly, academic-driven stratagem, what does an advocacy-oriented role look like? Principally, advocacy-oriented think-tanks “combine a strong policy, partisan or ideological bent with aggressive salesmanship [in] an effort to influence current policy debates” (Weaver 1989, 567). This study identifies four principal elements that distinguish an ‘advocacy-based’ orientation among American think-tanks: topicality, engagement with the media, increased politicization, and the broader marketing of ideas.

First, advocacy-oriented think-tanks pursue activities and outputs that indicate a timeliness and relevance to current policy debates, priorities, and events. While earlier incarnations of American think-tanks might have followed a publication schedule and orientation more akin to that of the scholarly community, advocacy-centric think-tanks are not afforded the luxury of dedicating considerable time to their research and proposals. Thus, for an American think-tank to succeed in an advocacy role, the activities and outputs must be disseminated within a temporally-relevant period to the salient policy debates at the time. Given that journalists and media actors are more likely to reference non-governmental publications that are relevant to developing news stories ‘of the day’ (Weiss and Singer 1988, 51), American think-tanks have a clear incentive to direct their internal research efforts to the most topical and newsworthy issues that can be disseminated widely. For example, The Heritage Foundation insists that its policy

proposals be crafted so as to be readable within fifteen minutes—the approximate travel time between Reagan Airport and congressional staff and representative’s Capitol Hill offices (Rich 2004, 206).

In addition to the dissemination of immediately-relevant research and proposals, American think-tanks are preoccupied overwhelmingly with their strong relationship and interaction with the media, particularly print and television. Furthermore, and in increasing importance today, American think-tanks are directing significant resources and efforts to inculcating a strong presence on social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.). For good reason, too. According to certain scholars (Gans 1980; Graber 1993; Rich and Weaver 2000), relations between the media and think-tanks can be positively reinforcing, whereby a think-tank that has been recognized as ‘expert’ or reliable by a given media outlet is likely to be more favoured in providing consistent, recurring interaction, and thus ‘air time.’ According to Graber, “sources who have gained recognition as ‘experts’ through media publicity tend to be used over and over again” (Graber 1993, 112). Gans further adds that “staff and timing being in short supply, journalists actively pursue only a small number of regular sources who have been available and suitable in the past, and are passive toward other possible news sources” (Gans 1980, 116). Rich and Weaver corroborate this for the print media, positing that “the [major] newspapers tend to rely on the same think tanks as sources” (Rich and Weaver 2000, 95). Clearly, then, American think-tanks have an incentive to pursue relations with the media, and especially media sources that have not been ‘captured’ by scholars or actors from other think-tanks.

While the distribution of a given think-tanks’ publication allows these organizations to target and reach a salient constituency of think-tank output (policy-makers), presenting their

findings and marketing their message through the media allows these organizations to reach an even broader and considerably more voluminous constituency: the public. Not surprisingly, many of the most visible American think-tanks devote considerable financial resources to the promotion of a highly visible and consistent media presence. For example, in any given year, the Heritage Foundation will devote approximately 10% of its budget to media and government relations (Heritage 2016)—given that annual revenue of the Foundation hovers around \$100 million (Heritage 2015), this is no small media outreach budget. CSIS, for its part, has provided a clear indication of media-centrism in the design of their new lavish headquarters in Washington—the new building, for example, “houses its own broadcast and recording studio, as well as its iDeas Lab—a modern production facility that uses the latest graphic design and audiovisual techniques to produce cutting-edge multimedia products” (CSIS 2013). Perhaps not surprisingly, there is evidence of a positive correlation between an organization’s allocation of resources to media outreach and the resultant visibility in the media (Danielian 1998). This is, once again, corroborated by Rich and Weaver, whose “analysis suggests that...funding translates into media visibility, which, in turn, may attract additional financing to visible organizations” (Rich and Weaver 2000, 99). Accordingly, a shift toward an advocacy-centric model has obliged American think-tanks to focus on media activities and outputs that reflect the topical policy issues and debates, as opposed to the more long-term analyses that are traditionally disseminated in book or scholarly article form. For example, “David Abshire, a founder and longtime president of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, described CSIS as action-oriented, not ‘book-based’” (Chinoy and Kaiser 1999, A25), further defying the notion that American think-tanks still see themselves as scholarly-focused.

The third principal component to an advocacy-centric model of American think-tanks is the trend towards an increased politicization in their activities and outputs. As Troy observes, “no longer confined to the neutral role of developing non-partisan policies, these institutions were active in the formulation and advancement of political arguments—a trend that, over the past decade, has only accelerated” (Troy 2012, 82). Though American think-tanks must necessarily remain non-partisan in order to maintain their tax-exempt status (IRS 2016, 501(c)(3)), this does not preclude these organizations from becoming increasingly ideological and unabashed in their particular ideational dispositions. Perhaps as a response to the increasing normalization of ideological polarization of American parties, policy-makers, and the electorate (Jacobson 2013, 688), American think-tanks have aligned their activities and outputs to complement their ideological persuasion. Thus, advocacy-oriented think-tanks are not advocating a particular piece of research or policy proposal; while this might appear to be the case, think-tanks are utilizing these outputs as a component of a larger ideological narrative they are attempting to shape and popularize within the American public policy community and broader public. As such, with the increased politicization of both American think-tanks and the broader American electorate, the capacity of these organizations to sustain their operations is impacted by the dominant partisan composure of American policy-makers. According to Troy, for example, “new Washington-based think tanks have, for the most part, tended to be less scholarly, increasingly political, and more likely to be tied to the fortunes of a party (or a wing within a party)” (Troy 2012, 81). It is perhaps interesting to note, *vis-à-vis* the previous discussion on think-tanks and the media, that some scholars have observed a differentiated media strategy on the basis of a think-tank’s ideological disposition. Namely, some have contended that ‘conservative’ think-tanks are more preoccupied and successful in garnering a heightened media

profile (Feulner 1986; Covington 1997), while ‘liberal’ think-tanks are not as obsessed with such a media-centric stratagem (Callahan 1995; Callahan 1999; Shuman 1998). Thus, central to an understanding of advocacy-oriented think-tanks is their heightened politicization, both as a response to, and as part of, the broader politicization of the American public.

A fourth aspect to advocacy-oriented think-tanks lies in their emphasis on the marketing and repackaging of ideas, as opposed to the constant generation of new, innovative, and original ideas. According to Weaver, “advocacy tanks synthesize and put a distinctive ‘spin’ on existing research rather than carrying out original research” (Weaver 1989, 567). Of course, the prioritization of marketing and repackaging of ideas rather than producing laborious, time-demanding original research is intimately connected with the aforementioned trait of these think-tank ideal-types. Namely, as increased politicization has required think-tanks to maintain fealty to a particular ideological disposition, the output of advocacy-oriented think-tanks begins from their desired conclusion on the basis of their ideological vantage point. In other words, whereas the ‘university without students’ think-tanks might have reached their conclusions and disseminated research on the basis of an original research question (with indeterminate conclusions at the outset) (Abelson 2002, 10), advocacy-oriented think-tanks follow an inverted process: begin by identifying the conclusions that best promulgate their ideological credibility, and then disseminate repackaged research on that basis. *The Economist* has picked up on this troubling trend, suggesting “‘normal’ academic institutions are expected to conduct their research first and draw their conclusions second. Some would argue that policy-driven US think tanks have reversed this process: ‘conclude, then justify’” (*The Economist*, “The dodgy side,” 2009). This aspect of the advocacy element of American think-tanks has even pressed one

scholar to suggest that there might, in fact, be even another category of think-tanks that have, as their sole purpose, marketing their ideas (Troy 2012, 85).

Whereas earlier incarnations of the American think-tank model focused on the generation of new ideas to suit the emergent and long-term opportunities and constraints in US public policy, advocacy-focused think-tanks are focused on marketing proposals and ideas to both a specific audience (i.e. policy-makers) as well as the broader public. To do so, American think-tanks regularly publish a wide variety of research that is not necessarily original, but instead contributes to the particular ideological or ideational underpinning of the given think-tank (through the use of existing research). Accordingly, while earlier American think-tanks were more akin to a ‘university without students,’ contemporary American think-tanks do not focus on producing scholarly research that might reasonably emanate from an academic institution. Instead, the priority of advocacy-centric think-tanks is the dissemination of easily digestible publications that facilitates the advancement of the given think-tank’s underpinning ideology.

7.3.2 – What role do supranational think-tanks pursue?

While American think-tanks have, since at least the early-1970s, pursued a stratagem that focuses heavily on advocacy, supranational think-tanks have pursued a fundamentally different role. Specifically, supranational think-tanks have developed what can best be described as a ‘network-oriented approach.’ As a distinct departure from the advocacy-oriented model that defines the contemporary American think-tank landscape, the network-oriented approach entails a markedly different stratagem. Focused around facilitating and promoting interactions among public and private actors in the European policy community, a network-oriented think-tank seeks to engage and congregate actors and organizations outside of a formal, institutional context. Procedurally, “for think tanks the creation of fora is an activity facilitated by their network

capacity and their ability to develop a common language accessible to all policy actors” (Perez 2014b, 148). What Perez interchangeably calls a ‘platform’ function to represent policy networking, supranational think-tanks are particularly astute at fulfilling, and benefit from. As such, “think-tanks perceive multiple benefits from platforms: network strengthening, knowledge accumulation, expansion of targeted publics, increased loyalty from old partners and the affiliation of new partners, members and sponsors, which together ensure funding and visibility” (Perez 2014, 339). Of course, supranational think-tanks are not the sole entity through which this networking can and does occur. Yet, as evidenced by the robust membership lists of the leading supranational think-tanks, public and private actors are attending events and activities of these organizations in significant numbers. As Ullrich notes in her analysis of the European Policy Centre (EPC), “members, the majority of which are corporations, professional associations and diplomatic missions, are considered crucial voices within the EU policy process. The EPC sees itself as providing a forum for its members to engage in dialogue with EU and member state officials” (Ullrich 2004, 57). Thus, supranational think-tanks have carved out a unique role in the European public policy community through their network-centrism. What, then, are the constituent elements of a network-oriented think-tank model? This study identifies three principal components to the network-oriented approach supranational think-tanks have adopted: intermediation, value-added connections, and emphasis on membership.

First, in adopting a network-oriented approach, supranational think-tanks adopt the role of intermediaries within the European public policy community. As intermediaries, supranational think-tanks provide an added value to the EU policy-making process by facilitating the interaction among policy-makers and non-governmental, policy-interested actors/organizations. Through this interaction, “EU think tanks are providing a space where multiple key perspectives

on EU polity are disseminated” (Perez 2014, 335). While there are formal means of engagement between policy-makers and civil society actors, the ability of these actors to interact outside of these formal channels allows for a more intimate and liberal exchange of ideas and interests. As Perez suggests, “the organisational outreach, consisting of a wide variety of activities in which different policy actors meet and a diversity of partners, members and sponsors provide support, indicates that EU think tanks have significant capacity to create and engage in policy networks” (Perez 2014, 334). Thus, one of the main comparative advantages supranational think-tanks are able to offer lies in their capacity to congregate policy-relevant actors in an informal context (Ullrich 2004, 67), where the formalities and processes of official institutional interaction are altogether side-stepped. Though non-state actors do engage frequently with the formal consultative mechanisms provided by the European Commission (Kluver 2011, 1; Rasmussen 2012, 12), such interactions can be frustratingly bureaucratic, laborious, and ‘crowded’ (Beyers and Bruycker 2013, 11). Or, perhaps an even worse condemnation, some scholars have suggested that consultative mechanisms between the Commission and non-state actors has become incestuous, with the same ‘insider’ organizations being consulted in any genuine capacity (Baumgartner 2007, 483; Broschied and Coen 2007, 348; Coen 1997, 98). Here, supranational think-tanks provide an alternative to the increasingly crowded and possibly nepotistic consultative processes between the Commission and non-state actors.

In addition to serving an intermediary role between policy-makers and civil society, the network-oriented role of supranational think-tanks facilitates the cultivation of value-added relationships between actors/organizations that might otherwise not be able to interact in a meaningful capacity. One of the main thrusts behind the value of a networking role by supranational think-tanks is that “relational strategies such as networks, partnerships and

collaboratives can enhance successful knowledge exchange” (Ward et. al 2009, 271), thereby leading to the ability of diverse actors to exchange valuable and proprietary knowledge with each other. For example, according to the Director of the EPC, these networking opportunities are “both a service to members but also an approach which enriches discussions, opens up access to institutional actors and a method to derive joined-up policy recommendations” (Fabian Zuleeg, personal communication, April 14, 2016). Thus, supranational think-tanks not only serve as intermediaries between actors, but they also provide a forum for these actors to transcend their existing network into other, ideally more fruitful and beneficial, networks. Not surprisingly, corporations have become particularly salient members and funders of supranational think-tanks—the access and intimacy of interactions with policy-makers through think-tank fora is clearly worth the investment in membership of these organizations. As Perez suggests,

the considerable presence of businesses is unsurprising,” adding that “at the transnational level, information about policymaking is less ubiquitous than at the national and local levels, so policy actors and businesses tend to use information intermediaries such as think tanks as vehicles to enable themselves to be informed and participate in policymaking (Perez 2014b, 161).

The principal point is that supranational think-tanks do not just facilitate networking among actors that would otherwise interact. Instead, the network-oriented think-tank seeks to facilitate interactions between those actors who would rarely meet within an officialised, institutional context. Through this intermediation function, supranational think-tanks add value to, and even create, relationships among policy-relevant actors at the EU level. As Ullrich has suggested, supranational think-tanks can be seen as fostering an environment where multiple policy networks overlap. For instance:

research indicates that numerous policy communities consisting of EU think tank researchers, national and EU bureaucrats, politicians, academics and corporate representatives are active within the EU policy environment. Although these various communities often differ in terms of nationality and specific policy issues, think tanks

provide a primary domain in which these various policy communities overlap. Thus, EU think tanks could be one factor in the development of a Europe-wide policy community (Ullrich 2004, 63).

In this sense, network-oriented think-tanks can provide a value-added service in facilitating interactions among actors who would otherwise have a difficult time doing so.

The third natural corollary to the two aforementioned qualities of a network-oriented approach is the emphasis on the membership and calibre of individuals/organizations frequenting the activities of supranational think-tanks. If network-oriented supranational think-tanks find their comparative advantage in their role as intermediaries and facilitators of value-added connections, the calibre and composure of their membership is an important reflection of these organizations' capacity to do so. Thus, network-oriented think-tanks devote considerable resources to expanding their membership roster; evidence of a robust and diverse membership is indicative of a think-tank's capacity to facilitate networking among otherwise disparate actors and organizations, not to mention their financial health. According to Perez, "partners, members and sponsors are a particularly clear indicator of the network capacity of think tanks because financial support generally grants membership or partnership status and allows active involvement," adding that "this implies that policy actors financially support think tanks because their work is somehow useful to them" (Perez 2014, 335). In annual reports and other marketing material, for example, supranational think-tanks visibly tout their esteemed and robust list of members from a variety of constituencies—corporations, diplomatic missions, and advocacy groups, in particular. It is not surprising then that, in addition to highlighting the merits of their membership, supranational think-tanks also actively promote the benefits of membership to organizations and actors with an investment in the outcomes of European policy-making.

Clearly, American and supranational think-tanks have adopted two distinct roles in their respective public policy communities. Whereas American think-tanks have sought to provide the impression of a demonstrable impact upon the policy-making process through an advocacy-oriented role, supranational think-tanks have found their niche by adopting less of an outcome-specific role and more of a process-driven role. For instance, supranational think-tanks derive more positive externalities by hosting a roundtable discussion with leading public and private European actors, whereas American think-tanks are more inclined to tout the frequency with which its scholars appear within the media. With these two divergent goals being pursued, it is also the case that these two think-tanks models naturally elicit different priorities that these organizations place in their outputs and activities. These priorities will now be considered more fully.

7.4 – The Priorities of American and Supranational Think-Tanks

Just as American and supranational think-tanks pursue two fundamentally different goals (advocacy-centric and network-centric, respectively), their internal priorities are equally as distinct. Specifically, this study will reveal that American think-tanks prioritize their resources to those activities and outputs that create an illusion of ‘influence,’ while supranational think-tanks’ main priority centers on their desire to add value to the interactions between the European policy-making and public policy communities outside of formal channels. In alignment with these priorities, the primary activities and outputs these two think-tanks models exhibit reflect their internal priorities.

7.4.1 – Priorities of American Think-Tanks

This study suggests that one of the main priorities of American think-tanks rests in creating an impression of ‘influence’ in the American policy-making process. As has been discussed in previous chapters, scholars and think-tanks alike have faced great difficulty in agreeing on an appropriate definition of the ‘influence’ that think-tanks pursue, and what a successful case of ‘influence’ looks like empirically. Yet, despite the nebulous nature of the term, American think-tanks are above all dedicated to the cultivation of their image as influential agents in the policy-making process and public policy narratives. This spurs two principal questions. First, how do American think-tanks’ activities and outputs reflect the prioritization of demonstrating ‘influence’? Second, and more critically, why have American think-tanks prioritized the pursuit of ‘influence’?

As Chapter 4 revealed, American think-tanks overwhelmingly leverage quantitative measures as the basis for reporting and marketing their activities and outputs, such as through annual reports. This does not necessarily suggest that, from an internal perspective, American think-tanks see themselves purely as quantitative engines constantly pursuing metrics—scholars and fellows researching on pressing public policy concerns, for example, might take exception with the mechanical assessment of these organizations as reducible to numerical indicators. Yet, for reasons that will become clear shortly, American think-tanks have been pressed into pursuing and marketing highly-quantifiable activities and outputs. So, what are these main activities and outputs that are mortgaged for making the case for ‘influence’? In particular, media interaction and congressional testimony are the salient means through which these organizations externally gauge their ‘influence.’ In interacting with the media, American think-tanks actively seek opportunities for the dissemination and discussion of their research on public policy matters,

while also making themselves available to provide comments and analysis on the pressing policy matters of the day. American think-tanks actively track their media exposure, and a ‘by-the-numbers’ section commonly found in think-tank marketing material almost always includes a reference to the frequency and overall quantity of exposure think-tanks receive from the media in its various forms. For American think-tanks, then, interaction with the media are particularly conducive to creating an impression of ‘influence.’

The second means through which American think-tanks provide an impression of ‘influence’ is through testimony before congressional committees and sub-committees. By presenting their research and insight before these committees, American think-tanks are able to command the attention of the very policy-makers that they seek to exert an impact on. According to a senior executive at the Brookings Institution, “our business is to influence policy with scholarly, independent research, based on objective criteria, and to be policy-relevant, we need to engage policy makers” (Lipton, Williams, and Confessore 2014). Thus, through direct engagement with policy-makers in a formal setting, think-tanks can (and do) actively promote these interactions as indicative of their capacity to have a demonstrable influence on the policy-making process. Yet, it is not simply the case that American think-tanks highlight these interactions with the media and congressional bodies as indicative of their ‘influence’ on policy matters. It is also the case that American think-tanks use the impression of their media and institutional ‘influence’ as a mechanism for demonstrating their credibility. As Rich and Weaver suggest, “media visibility has become an especially important priority for nongovernmental research organizations whose principal mission is to produce and promote their expertise among policymakers” (Rich and Weaver 2000, 81). As will be demonstrated in the subsequent chapter, American think-tanks necessarily have to affirm their credibility and legitimacy in the public

policy community—a task which, for various reasons, supranational think-tanks do not have to actively pursue. By tracking and subsequently marketing their citations in the media and their testimony before congressional bodies, American think-tanks are able to create an impression of their acceptance—and concomitant credibility—by some of the major arbiters and discussants of policy in the US (Abelson 2009, 79). The ability of American think-tanks to affirm their utility to policy-makers is particularly important in soliciting donations from foreign governments and organizations, the enormous extent of which has only recently been revealed (Lipton, Williams, and Confessore, 2014). For instance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway frankly revealed that:

in Washington, it is difficult for a small country to gain access to powerful politicians, bureaucrats and experts. Funding powerful think tanks is one way to gain such access, and some think tanks in Washington are openly conveying that they can serve only those foreign governments that provide funding (Bjorgaas 2012, 29).

Thus, in soliciting donations and endowments from current and potential funders, the visibility of a given think-tank in the media or before congressional committees/sub-committees allows these organizations to make a compelling case that their message and outputs are being heard, and hence legitimated, by the American public policy community. So, if it is the case that American think-tanks have expressed one of their utmost priorities—creating an impression of ‘influence’—by interacting with the media and Congress, why have they adopted such a stratagem?

While it may have once been the case that donors and benefactors to some of the earliest think-tanks were more altruistic in their expectations as donors, contemporary think-tanks face a more pragmatic funding community. Namely, the contemporary American think-tank environment is marked by donors who are increasingly demanding a tangible means of gauging the impact of their donations. In fitting with a free-market understanding of the American think-

tank environment, donors are inclined to direct their funds to those organizations that are ostensibly most capable of delivering a ‘return on investment.’ While it is difficult to reduce the think-tank donor community to a homogenous group, it is not unreasonable to suggest that donors expect their donations to contribute to the fulfillment of the goals think-tanks outwardly market—impacting the policy-making process and regulating the broader narratives on public policy matters. Foreign governments, for example, have utilized American think-tanks as part of their efforts to impact the foreign policy outputs and narratives of the US. As the *New York Times* has cynically concluded,

money is increasingly transforming the once-staid think-tank world into a muscular arm of foreign governments’ lobbying in Washington. And it has set off troubling questions about intellectual freedom: Some scholars say they have been pressured to reach conclusions friendly to the government financing the research,” troublingly adding that “some scholars say the donations have led to implicit agreements that the research groups would refrain from criticizing the donor governments (Lipton, Williams, and Confessore 2014).

Accordingly, American think-tanks need to provide metrics and standards against which their effectiveness can be gauged—whether or not this is an accurate reflection of their internal conceptualizations of purpose or aspiration, American think-tanks require generous donors and benefactors to ensure their operational longevity. In short, then, American think-tanks have prioritized the pursuit of media interaction and congressional testimony to bolster their credibility and impression of ‘influence’ to the donor community, present and potential.

7.4.2 – Priorities of Supranational Think-Tanks

Supranational think-tanks, by contrast, have prioritized a distinctly different ontological ambition. Namely, supranational think-tanks have prioritized their capacity to add value to interactions among policy-makers and the broader European public policy community. For reasons that will be delineated shortly, supranational think-tanks have not faced the same need as

American think-tanks to ‘prove’ their legitimacy and credibility in their respective public policy community. Instead, supranational think-tanks have, by the actions and processes of various supranational decision-making procedures, had their legitimacy and credibility validated ‘upon arrival’ into the European public policy community. As a result, supranational think-tanks have not felt the immense pressure to pursue and market their most quantifiable outputs to the scale—and necessity—of American think-tanks. So, how have supranational think-tanks sought to add value to interactions between public and private actors in the EU?

As indicated in Chapter 6, supranational think-tanks have gauged their ‘success’ in alignment with the principal activities they pursue. In other words, unlike the American think-tank experience—whereby some activities and outputs do not necessarily conform to their pursuit of quantitative, influence-indicative benchmarks—supranational think-tanks have demonstrated alignment between their activities/outputs and the relative importance of these activities/outputs in their internal estimations of their ‘success.’ Thus, supranational think-tanks have sought to add value to policy actors’ interactions through two main vehicles: hosting/sponsoring multiple fora for these interactions to take place and cultivating a robust and diverse membership roster. Through speakers series, debates, seminars, roundtable discussions, etc. supranational think-tanks have demonstrated a salience of these fora to their dominant activities and outputs. In annual reports and other marketing materials, supranational think-tanks visibly and dominantly highlight the calibre of speakers, the number of events, and diversity of event formats, and other pertinent elements of these congregations. Particular emphasis is placed on the diversity of event formats, from large ‘great question’ debates to considerably smaller, more intimate gatherings of vested actors in a parochial topic or area of policy. As explained in Chapter 5, these events are where supranational think-tanks are most capable of fulfilling a

policy networking role. Through ‘issue networks’ and ‘policy communities,’ supranational think-tanks can incite a wide variety of actors with diverse event-format preferences into attending and networking within these fora. Thus, one of the main means through which supranational think-tanks fulfill their priority of ‘value-added’ networking emanates from their capacity to host a diverse range of events for policy-interested actors to congregate and interact.

The second avenue that supranational think-tanks use to add value to policy-relevant interactions stems from their capacity to maintain a robust and diverse membership base. Once again, annual reports and marketing materials of supranational think-tanks highlight the robustness and diversity of their membership base, which serves a two-fold purpose. First, promoting a strong membership base allows think-tanks to claim a degree of acceptance and recognition by the policy and private community as providing some benefit to its members. By highlighting the robustness of the membership, think-tanks are able to suggest that their visibility is strong, and that their numerous member organizations derive a benefit from an official membership with a given think-tanks. Further, identifying and highlighting the diversity of their membership allows think-tanks to suggest that their mandate and activities/outputs do not reflect a single constituency, but rather welcome civil society organizations of all stripes. The second benefit that supranational think-tanks garner from promoting their membership is more superficial. Namely, by highlighting a robust and diverse membership, supranational think-tanks use these indicators to attract potential donors and members; if a great many diverse organizations are members of a given think-tank, the logic goes, so too can membership conceivably benefit a currently non-member organization. Thus, focusing on these aspects of their membership base serves as a testament to a given think-tanks’ acceptance in the public policy community, while also serving a more pragmatic purpose of attracting potential new

members. Shortly, it will become apparent why supranational think-tanks have shirked the traditional, American-centric priority of think-tanks (creating an impression of ‘influence’) in favour of intermediating and adding value to relationships between policy-relevant actors.

7.5 – American and Supranational Think-Tanks’ Main Constituencies

While it has been demonstrated that American and supranational think-tanks pursue different roles with concomitantly different priorities, it is also important to provide a brief consideration of how these roles/priorities impact the natural—or targeted—constituencies of these different think-tank models. By ‘constituencies,’ this study refers to two principal groups: the targets of think-tank activities and outputs (‘output constituency’) and the targets for fundraising/soliciting donations (‘donor constituency’). Through these two forms of constituencies, it will be evident that American and supranational think-tanks seek to attract and pursue two different groups and demographics in both their output and their fundraising efforts. Before exploring some of the differences in their constituencies, however, it is important to note that there exists a particularly important similarity in a constituency that both American and supranational think-tanks target in their activities and outputs.

The principal similarity that American and supranational think-tanks demonstrate in their constituencies is that of policy-makers, or those with otherwise formal, institutional power in the relevant decision-making bodies in the US and EU. Both American and supranational think-tanks seek to engage with institutional policy-makers, though to different extents. American think-tanks, as previously indicated, seek to exert a demonstrable impact on the institutional policy-making process, and one of the main mechanisms think-tanks use to indicate this is their testimony before congressional committees and sub-committees. Through testifying before congressional bodies, American think-tanks are able to extract two main further benefits to their

other constituencies. First, American think-tanks actively reference their congressional testimony to current and possible donors as an indication of their relevance, credibility, and visibility to one of the policy-making loci in the US political system. Second, particularly in cases of high policy relevance to the broader public, congressional testimony provides American think-tanks with an exceptional opportunity for strengthening their media profile. Despite media attention not being the principal purpose behind think-tanks' testimony before congress, it is an important positive externality that enhances the media attention directed toward a given think-tank. Understandably, in testifying on matters of particularly public interest and pressing importance, there will be heightened media attention.

For supranational think-tanks, their policy-making constituency is linked to the capacity of these organizations to attract high-level policy-makers to their events and fora to interact with policy-relevant actors and organizations. Thus, the relationship between supranational think-tanks and policy-makers is not necessarily as policy-driven or formal as it is in the American case, but is rather more networking-driven. For instance, “examination of access to the [European] Parliament and Commission suggests that EU think tanks dispense with the opportunities provided for non-state actors and consequently lack spaces to communicate with officials in institutional settings” (Perez 2014, 336). It would appear, then, that supranational think-tanks tend to reject opportunities for formal engagement with policy-makers, instead preferring informal routes of engagement. Thus, policy-makers are a constituency of supranational think-tanks in as far as the principal aspiration of these think-tanks is to gather private and public actors under the aegis of the think-tank. In short, both American and supranational think-tanks can claim their respective institutional policy-makers as a constituency. However, American think-tanks treat policy-makers as an extension of their ‘output,’ whereas

supranational think-tanks see policy-makers through their ability to serve as an ‘input’ (i.e. attend think-tank events and interact with non-governmental actors). Despite this similarity in constituency, supranational and American think-tanks otherwise pursue demonstrably different target audiences; not surprising, perhaps, given the extent to which the roles and priorities of these organizations differ. These differences in constituency will now be considered, from the perspective of the targets of outputs and donor communities.

7.5.1 – *‘Output Constituencies’*

By ‘output constituencies,’ this study refers to the main actors, organizations, and institutions that a given think-tank seeks to impact or garner the attention of. In the case of American think-tanks, this study suggests that the primary ‘output constituency’ is the media. As was highlighted in Chapters 3 and 4, American think-tanks necessarily pursue an aggressive media strategy that seeks to expose the research or mandate of the organization in a quantitatively impressive way, with further consideration of the prestige of the particular media outlet (albeit to a lesser degree of importance). Engaging with the media allows American think-tanks to benefit from the high visibility that these outlets can provide, along with a credibility-affirming benefit that comes with attention and interaction with particularly high-profile media outlets. Not surprisingly, American think-tanks have continued to devote an ever-greater proportion of their operating expenses to the perpetuation of a media strategy that allows their research and scholars to be consistently exposed to the mass public. Of course, with increased visibility and the credibility that can be affirmed through a strong media profile, American think-tanks are able to leverage their media interaction as an indication of their relevance and expertise—“the more exposure think tanks generate, the more influential their directors claim they are” (Abelson 2009, 86). By highlighting the quantity and quality of their interaction with

the media, American think-tanks utilize these aspects to suggest that their ‘voice’ (and, concomitantly, the ‘voice’ of their ideological underpinning) is being heard by a wide range of actors, from policy-makers to the broader public. Accordingly, a strong media presence is an opportune conduit through which American think-tanks can make their case for ‘influence.’ With the aforementioned demand by donors for objective, metricized indicators of think-tank performance, the ability of think-tanks to interact with the media serves as an indication that such ‘influence’ is taking place (however warranted such a case might be). For example, Rich and Weaver succinctly uncover this relationship between media exposure and donor attraction to a given think-tank, suggesting that

efforts to make judgments about think-tank influence are very strong among funders of think-tank research, who are concerned with obtaining ‘value for their money’ when they have limited funds to disburse. Following organizational visibility is one relatively easy way to form such judgments (Rich and Weaver 2000, 100).

Thus, American think-tanks have, as arguably their primary ‘output constituency,’ the American media.

For supranational think-tanks, however, their main ‘output constituency’ represents a clear deviation from the media-centric focus of American think-tanks. In fact, the European media are not a constituency for supranational think-tanks in any significant capacity. Instead, the main ‘output constituency’ of supranational think-tanks are organizations, especially corporations, which are either members or potential members. Because supranational think-tanks focus overwhelmingly on their role as networkers (as opposed to a considerably more heightened ‘knowledge management’ role adopted by American think-tanks), their capacity to congregate public and private actors in their fora is crucial. Further, because organizational membership is a *sine qua non* for supranational think-tank operational sustainability, engagement with organizational actors not only provides more networking opportunities, but also bolsters the

institutional revenue of the think-tank (Perez 2014b, 161). Thus, it is incumbent upon supranational think-tanks to target organizational actors in their marketing and outreach efforts, as these actors are central to the roles, priorities, and financial security of think-tanks. It was demonstrated earlier in this study that while supranational think-tanks focus on organizations in their membership and marketing efforts, there is a specific organizational form that think-tanks have tended to gravitate toward: corporations, especially of the multi-national variety. Corporate donors overwhelmingly make up the majority of organizational contributions to supranational think-tanks in most cases (with the rare exception of those think-tanks with significant endowments or ‘strategic partnerships’). It is natural, then, that supranational think-tanks would focus their marketing and outreach efforts to those organizations that comprise a significant component of their revenue inflow, especially in a financially precarious think-tank climate. With corporations representing the principal non-governmental actors networking in think-tank fora—and given their indelible financial imperative for think-tanks—it is understandable that the main ‘output constituency’ for supranational think-tanks are corporations. While American and supranational think-tanks clearly have different ‘output constituencies,’ they also differ considerably in their ‘donor constituencies,’ which is to say the main demographics they target in their fundraising efforts.

7.5.2 – ‘Donor Constituencies’

In their fundraising efforts and solicitations for donations, American think-tanks overwhelmingly focus on individuals in these efforts. The Heritage Foundation alone relies on some 500,000 individual donors to contribute to its operating budget (Heritage 2016). Though many American think-tanks do offer corporations and organizations opportunities for membership, the focus of these think-tanks in their fundraising efforts rests with the grass-roots,

‘bottom-up’ fundraising model that targets individuals across the country. Though it might seem curious as to why American think-tanks have shirked an overriding emphasis on deep-pocketed organizational actors in favour of individuals for their fundraising, there is perhaps a nuanced explanation for this. Specifically, because American think-tanks are, and have growingly become, exceptionally ideological in their outputs and mandate (Troy 2012, 76), it is easier to make a compelling case for donations when there is an ideological concordance between a given think-tank and individual. Individuals with a determined ideological orientation will naturally have more of an interest, support for, and shared desired outcome for public policy with a similarly-oriented think-tank. Thus, it is perhaps possible that American think-tanks have focused on individual-level fundraising as individuals might feel more inclined to donate to an ideologically proximate think-tank, rather than corporations that might have a looser, or no, ideological inclination. As the Heritage Foundation bluntly states in its membership solicitation webpage, “as a conservative, you know we are your voice in Washington” (Heritage Foundation 2016). In the case of organizations and corporations, though, the identification of a clear ideological preference is not necessarily obvious (nor even present), which in itself might make corporations less of a natural donor constituency for American think-tanks. As will now be demonstrated, supranational think-tanks pursue a markedly different donor constituency, for reasons altogether different than in the American case.

In particular, supranational think-tanks pursue corporations as their primary ‘donor constituency.’ In fact, for many supranational think-tanks, there is no indication that there is an option for individual membership, nor is there any indication that these think-tanks are actively interested in integrating individual-level membership options into their operations, activities, and outputs. For example, one of the most visible supranational think-tanks, in dealing with

individual membership, provides a difficult-to-find addendum to their membership marketing page which notes that “in certain cases, for example, retired EU or national officials, individual membership is possible and is considered on a case-by-case basis” (EPC 2016). Thus, from the perspective of the EPC at least, individual membership is not normally offered, nor does there appear to be an abundant interest in offering such a category of membership. Annual reports of supranational think-tanks almost always include a section—oftentimes prominently displayed—that highlights their membership quantity and quality. Overwhelmingly, the vast majority of donors to supranational think-tanks are corporate actors, with diplomatic missions and other trade groups serving as distantly secondary sources of membership revenue. In particular, many of the corporate donors to these organizations tend to be multi-national in operation, with the EU serving as just one of their multiple regions of commerce. Given the aforementioned roles and priorities of supranational think-tanks, it is perhaps unsurprising that their main ‘donor constituency’ is overwhelmingly corporate in composition. With ‘policy networking’ serving as the central *raison d’etre* of supranational think-tanks, their capacity to serve as intermediaries between policy actors relies heavily on their ability to attract these organizations to think-tank events and fora. Accordingly, while corporate/organizational membership in supranational think-tanks typically includes complimentary access to the ‘knowledge management’ outputs, the crux of corporate membership—from the perspective of both corporations/organizations and the think-tanks themselves—rests in the networking opportunities that are provided, directly or indirectly. As CEPS notes in its marketing of membership, “your membership makes you privy to a dynamic forum for networking and idea exchange” (CEPS 2016). Thus, supranational think-tanks direct the significant majority of their marketing and fundraising efforts toward the corporate community, both European and multinational. In short, then, while American think-

tanks' principal 'donor constituency' is found at the individual level, supranational think-tanks have pursued a fundraising strategy that focuses overwhelmingly on their ability to entice organizational, and specifically corporate, actors to membership.

7.6 – Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to identify and discuss some of the more salient and manifest differences that exist between the American and supranational think-tank communities. In particular, there were three over-riding elements to the American and supranational think-tank experience that were highlighted. First, the roles of these two think-tank models were explored, with it being posited that while American think-tanks are advocacy-based in their orientation, supranational think-tanks seek to fulfill more of a network-oriented role. American think-tanks actively seek to have their 'voices' heard before congressional committees and, in increasingly acute importance, the media. Supranational think-tanks, on the other hand, have adopted a role that is considerably more detached from direct policy involvement or articulation, instead pursuing a role that is intermediary in nature and involves the assembling of policy-relevant actors under their auspices. After analyzing the divergent roles of these two think-tank models, the concomitant priorities of these organizations were then interrogated. It was revealed that the main priorities of American think-tanks are two-fold: the pursuit of opportunities to testify before congressional bodies and the inculcation of a strong (and ever-stronger) media presence. Supranational think-tanks, by contrast, find their priorities in the facilitation of events for policy networking to take place, alongside the development, growth, and diversity of their membership base, with a clear and distinct bias towards corporations.

Finally, the principal constituencies of American and supranational think-tanks were discussed, with attention to two main categories of constituency: 'output' and 'donor'

constituencies. It was first qualified, though, that for all their differences in constituency, both American and supranational think-tanks do seek to engage policy-makers in their various activities and outputs. However, while both think-tank models do target policy-makers, their intents are different; for American think-tanks, they seek to testify and have their ‘voices’ heard by policy-makers, while supranational think-tanks seek to attract policy-makers to their fora for the purposes of facilitating policy networking with their non-governmental members. From an ‘output constituency’ perspective, American think-tanks focus on research dissemination and interaction with the media. Through a circuitous and positively-reinforcing process, media interaction allows American think-tanks to ultimately be able to have their ‘voice’ heard the loudest by the most number of stakeholders, from policy-makers to the broader public. Supranational think-tanks, on the other, focus on their corporate members (and potential donors) as the main addressees for the activities and outputs of these organizations. From a ‘donor constituency’ perspective, it was determined that American think-tanks seek to involve individual-level donors as the main constituency in their fundraising efforts while, not surprisingly, supranational think-tanks overwhelmingly direct their fundraising and outreach efforts to multinational corporate actors.

From the preceding analysis, it is clear that American and supranational think-tanks, though sharing the same titular designation, possess markedly different ambitions and means through which they seek to fulfill their aspirations. Just acknowledging the major asymmetries between these two think-tank models, however, does not adequately cover the full picture. It is now this study’s task to posit the major explanatory underpinnings that can reconcile the asymmetry between the American and supranational think-tank models, and what implications these differences have had on the think-tank environments in these two contexts. Effectively, the

remainder of this study seeks to answer two principal questions: why are American and supranational think-tanks so different, and what are the implications of these differences?

CHAPTER 8: WHY ARE AMERICAN AND SUPRANATIONAL THINK-TANKS DIFFERENT, AND WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS?

8.1—Introduction

While the previous chapter highlighted the more salient and manifest differences that exist between American and supranational think-tanks, the present chapter's goal is two-fold. First, this chapter will offer an explanatory framework that can contribute to a better understanding of why these think-tank models have pursued such divergent trajectories. Second, it is important to consider subsequently the implications that these explanatory factors have for the think-tank environments in the US and EU. Given that American and supranational think-tanks pursue and fulfill markedly different roles, priorities, and constituencies (among other differences), there must necessarily be underlying reasons for this divergence. With the ubiquity of the American think-tank model as the template many new and nascent think-tanks have employed throughout the world, this study rejects the notion that supranational think-tanks have pursued their trajectory out of ignorance or naiveté to the eminence of the American think-tank experience and transplantable model. Instead, the decision to proceed along the current trajectory has been the result of a deliberate strategy of supranational think-tanks in response to two dominant, overriding factors: political institutions and political culture.

From an institutional perspective, it will be posited that supranational think-tanks have evolved in response to the EU institutional and constitutional receptiveness to civil society actors, whereas American think-tanks have necessarily been obligated to validate their legitimacy and credibility. Though certain activities and outputs that supranational think-tanks pursue do suggest an attempt to enhance their public perception of legitimacy, they do not do so out of necessity. From a political culture standpoint, this study will argue that the American think-tank experience, especially since the early 1970s, has been regulated by a competitive

environment through forces similar to the free-market, capitalist system that is itself highly associated with the US. In the EU, however, supranational think-tanks operate within a political culture that favors a plurality of equal actors, with no ‘voice’ capable of overshadowing that of others. This study will explain the aforementioned differences between American and supranational think-tanks, followed by a consideration of what implications this has for these two think-tank models.

8.2—Institutional Factors Affecting Think-Tank Behavior

When discussing the impact of the respective institutional arrangements on both American and supranational think-tanks, it is clear that neither the US nor the EU institutional layout is prohibitive or even inhospitable for think-tanks to exercise an impact on policy-making and broader public policy discussions. However, this study suggests that institutional peculiarities between these two systems have had an impact upon the nature of the roles and priorities supranational and American think-tanks have subsequently pursued. At first glance, though, American and supranational think-tanks operate within an uncannily similar institutional setup, based on the principles of separation of powers and a federalist structure (albeit with an additional ‘level’ in the European case). As the architectural renderings of the European Union (European Community, at the time) were being discussed and debated following the Second World War, state leaders sought to build a foundation upon which integration could be deepened and widened, ostensibly in perpetuity (or until a federal structure was realized). In deciding the form that an integrated Europe would take, many of the ‘founding fathers’ of the European Community ultimately envisioned a federal structure based on the institutional layout of the United States (European Commission 2013a). It is understandable then that some of the earliest discussions of a viable European integration project were centered around the notion of a ‘United

States of Europe’; an ostensibly strict sovereigntist, even Winston Churchill was one of several key figures to trumpet the necessity of such an initiative (Churchill 1946). Yet, the similarities are far more notable than just their ‘United States’ prefix. For example, much like the American political system, the European policy-making apparatus features a separation of powers similar to that of the US. Where the directly elected legislative branch is found in the House of Representatives in the US, the European Parliament serves a similar function in the EU. Similarly, the European Commission possesses similar competences to the executive branch in the US. Finally, with the Supreme Court of the United States representing the judicial branch in the US, the European Court of Justice can be understood as fulfilling the same role for the EU (with judicial supremacy, no less). Thus, it can be seen that, quite deliberately, there are considerable institutional overlaps in terms of the separation of powers between the US and EU (Fischer 1993, 399).

Furthermore, another clear institutional parallel can be drawn from this study’s perspective between the EU and US on the basis of the federalist structure that has been adopted. However, scholars studying the EU have been unable to reach a consensus on what might be the most accurate descriptor of the EU’s power-sharing arrangement—whether it is best understood as multi-level governance (and the multiple varieties thereof), federalist, confederalist, *sui generis*, etc. Understandably, where one ‘stands’ on this question largely depends on where one ‘sits’ theoretically. For instance, neofunctionalist scholars such as Ernst Haas and Leon Lindberg see the EU as an exponentially expanding organ in its competences and jurisdiction. Intuitively then, these same scholars are inclined to identify the EU as aligning with a federalist, or perhaps confederalist, power-sharing dynamic (Burgess 1986; Scharpf 1988; Koslowski 2001; Borsel and Hosli 2003; Borzel 2003, 1). Intergovernmental scholars such as Andrew Moravcsik or Stanley

Hoffman, however, are less inclined to assign significant institutional power and autonomy to the EU, and are therefore likely to view the EU system through more of a state-centric lens, whereby member state sovereignty is still paramount (Keohane and Hoffman 1991; Moravcsik 2001, 186).⁷ Though there have been some attempts to devise and promote a ‘third way’ between these theoretical poles (Moga 2009, 805), many scholars’ contributions to the literature on EU politics can be reduced to one of these two theoretical paradigms, explicitly or otherwise. For this study, it will be suggested that a federalist approach best captures the power-sharing dynamics within the EU, especially as the European institutions have come to adopt a more activist and constitutionally enshrined role, earnestly baptized by the unabashedly pro-European agenda of Commission President Jacques Delors in the mid-1980s (Moravcsik 1991, 24; Dobson 2007, 13). If we understand the EU to represent a separation of powers and a federalist structure similar to that of the US, what basis is there for an institutional account of the divergences between the American and supranational think-tanks? After all, facing a markedly similar institutional arrangement, one would expect that their roles, priorities, and strategies would demonstrate symmetry in the face of similar institutional opportunities and constraints. Yet, this is obviously not the case, and for good reason. In particular, this study suggests that the institutionalized legitimation that has been afforded to supranational think-tanks has allowed these organizations to pursue different roles, priorities, and constituencies than their American counterparts. This argument will now be explained and expanded upon in greater detail.

If the European Union has fostered an institutional setup that shares many of the dominant features of the US political system, it is clear that the structural institutional differences

⁷ Such a view is consistent with scholars understanding international relations through a ‘statist’ paradigm, whereby state sovereignty and the actorhood of state actors is paramount to understanding domestic sources and foreign opportunities/constraints on state behaviour. For a seminal account of the ‘statist’ approach, see Krasner (1978).

alone cannot account for the markedly different think-tank landscapes in these geo-institutional contexts. Instead, there exists a particularly notable institutional difference between the US and EU, namely in the appetite for these governmental institutions to the formal integration of non-governmental interests, or ‘factions.’ Specifically, throughout its recent history and especially since the 1980s (Sternberg 2013, 131; Dehousse 1995, 125), the EU has taken deliberate steps to involve a larger number of actors and interests into the supranational decision-making process. It must be noted, however, that this study is not suggesting that the institutional layout of the US is inhospitable to the introduction of ‘factions’ into the policy-making process or public policy discussions, despite Madison’s now-distant warning (Madison 1787). As mentioned earlier, it is by no coincidence that the American think-tank model has been touted as, empirically-speaking, the most successful and most transplanted around the world (Stone 2004, 40). Empirically, the United States hosts an extremely active civil society community that has consistently, and many would suggest successfully, had their voices ‘heard’ by those possessing institutionalized power. Thus, this study does not mean to suggest that the US political system has dissuaded the development and injection of ‘factions’ into the policy-making and public policy communities. However, there is a principal divergence in the nature of the relationship between American and EU’s institutions and ‘factions.’ Namely, the EU has provided a formal role for interest-representing actors in the policy-making process, particularly in the early stages of policy development (Mahoney 2004, 443). It is important to briefly mention why the EU has pursued such a relationship between civil society and the institutions of the EU, unlike the US case (and most other liberal democracies, for that matter).

8.2.1—The EU's 'Democratic Deficit'

Beginning in the late 1980s, scholars, pundits, and domestic political actors alike began to question the extent to which the ever-expanding European Union reflected the democratic principles that it has normatively celebrated and evangelized (Kohler-Koch and Rittberger 2007, 1). With this burgeoning challenge to the democratic legitimacy of the EU—which has since been referred to as the 'democratic deficit'—came a broad debate that, understandably, might be impossible to resolve or reconcile to complete unanimous satisfaction.

In positing the presence of a 'democratic deficit' within the EU—which Dahl suggests is inherent, given that we cannot "describe undemocratic systems as democratic" (Dahl 1999, 34)—there are multiple sources from which grievances have historically and contemporarily been raised and targeted. It is important to qualify, however, that not all agree that the EU normatively aspires to be a 'democracy,' as will become clear as the critics of the 'democratic deficit' argument have been raised. For instance, the UK-based Electoral Reform Society suggests "the original designers of the European Union – such as Jean Monnet, a French civil servant who was never elected to office – did not envision it as a democratic project so much as a technocratic one, in which European institutions would seek to bring the continent together through largely invisible management of the European economy" (Terry 2014, 10). Despite this tangential normative debate (largely found in the more incendiary, bellicose, and polemical outputs of the aggressively Eurosceptic organizations and actors), scholars purporting the presence of a 'democratic deficit' highlight the possibility (or, in some scholars' view, actuality) of a 'runaway executive' and the absence of a European *demos*.

In the institutional architecture of the EU, the European Commission exercises a disproportionately large degree of competences when compared to most domestic state executive

branches in democracies, including the prerogative to initiate and apply laws at the EU level (European Commission 2015). Accordingly, just as the Commission has historically represented the most assertively pro-European organ within the EU, the importance of the Commission to the policy-making process within the EU affords it a high degree of power. From the critical perspective of those asserting the presence of a ‘democratic deficit,’ such a powerful central executive is problematic. Though disproportionately strong executives are not altogether rare in a democratic state, the presence of an equally, if not more powerful legislature is often seen as a sufficient counter-balance to such a strong executive. In the EU, however, this is categorically not the case. Despite marked increases in the competences and counter-balancing capacities of the European Parliament since the inception of directly-electable parliamentarians in 1979, the enumerated powers of the Commission vastly overshadow the ostensible ‘check and balance’ function of the EP. Thus, notwithstanding increases to the powers of the EP (including a means through which the composure of the Commission’s leadership can be challenged, wholesale), the Commission remains capable of continuing its hegemonic role within EU policy-making, largely uninterrupted by an elected legislature (Andersen and Burns, 1996; Raunio, 1999; Hix and Follesdal 2006, 535). The second principal claim that has marked the case for a ‘democratic deficit’ emanates from the absence of a European ‘demos.’ Through this line of thought, the EU is incapable of being deemed democratic on the basis that there is no populace to which the EU is accountable (Sifft et al. 2007, 128; Azan 2011, 247). This argument for the ‘democratic deficit’ is more structural in nature, and one’s standpoint on such a claim will largely reflect one’s philosophical perspective on the nature of ‘democracy.’ Naturally, such an esoteric debate rests largely within political philosophy scholarship, and is not particularly relevant to the analysis or conclusions of this study.

On the other hand, for those rejecting the need for a deeper democratization of the EU, there have been two principal arguments in favor of maintaining the status quo. First, some scholars have suggested that critics of the EU's 'democratic deficit' seek to impose democratic standards that are not, or cannot be met by member state governments themselves (Moravcsik 2004, 362; Innerarity 2014). Thus, seeking to democratize the EU to such an ideal-type represents a degree of hypocrisy and double standards of member states themselves. Principally, critics are advancing an ideal-type of democratic governance that might not be attainable, or even desirable, in the contemporary multi-level decision-making environment. The second major rejection of the 'democratic deficit' has come from scholars and activists who suggest that the EU represents a form of governance that is not easily reconciled with the traditional state-based unit of analysis for most benchmarks of 'democracy.' Accordingly, because the EU represents a form of governance that is not tantamount to a member state, for example, democratic standards that are imposed against a state are not similarly applicable to the EU. Thus, for scholars like Richardson and Majone, who see the EU not as a traditional redistributive state but rather a regulatory intergovernmental regime, popular legitimation is not required to the same extent as in a traditional nation-state. According to Richardson, then, the "EU central policy activity is regulation, rather than distribution/redistribution" (Thatcher 2006, 312). As expanded by Majone, "redistributive policies can be legitimated only by majoritarian means and thus cannot be delegated to institutions independent of the political process; efficiency-oriented policies, on the other hand, are basically legitimated by results, and hence may be delegated to such institutions, provided an adequate system of accountability is in place" (Majone 1998, 28). Thus, for this challenge to the 'democratic deficit,' traditional states and the *sui generis* nature of the EU warrant different standards of democracy, and the basis of judgement thereof. In short,

scholars rejecting the presence of a ‘democratic deficit’ in the EU challenge the hypocrisy of the standards against which the EU is judged (*vis-à-vis* domestic regimes) and the difficulty in comparing the fundamentally different governance roles filled by the EU and its member states/other democratic states.

Whether or not there is indeed a genuine ‘democratic deficit’ in the EU—and, given the challenge in agreeing on a conception of ‘democracy,’ a unanimous perspective is unlikely—the response of the EU (namely the Commission) to these allegations suggests the affirmative. Though the entirety of the EU’s institutional responses to the alleged ‘democratic deficit’ far eclipse the scope and space of this analysis, it is important to now look at how the EU’s attempt to reaffirm its democratic status has affected the relationship between the EU and civil society actors.

In response to the amplified calls for the democratization of the EU (or, at least, the purportedly weak democratic track-record of the integration project), the European Commission began an aggressive campaign to promote further democracy within the institutions, activities, and outputs of the EU. In doing so, the Commission’s goal was “to beef up the legitimacy of its consultation procedures, and its own institutional legitimacy” (Kaiser and Meyer 2013, 5). Notwithstanding some of the most visible and structural changes (such as expanded competences of the EP), the Commission has also pursued democratizing steps that are particularly relevant to civil society organizations (Marziali 2009, 20), including supranational think-tanks. One of the main themes of the Commission’s response to the ‘democratic deficit’ accusers was the deliberate inclusion of non-state, non-governmental actors into the policy-making process at the EU level. However, such a desire was not simply rhetorical or limited in temporal scope. Instead,

the provision and recognized importance of civil society input into EU policy-making was constitutionally enshrined.

For instance, according to Article 11 of the *Treaty on the Functioning of the EU*, “the [EU’s] institutions shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society,” adding that “the Commission shall carry out broad consultations with parties concerned in order to ensure that the Union's actions are coherent and transparent” (TFEU, Article 11). In facilitating formal interaction through the Commission, “whilst a variety of exchanges exist, with varying degrees of institutionalisation and formality, there has been a concerted effort to systematise these exchanges as part of an effort to improve the legitimacy of EU policy-making derived from opportunities for participation” (Greenwood and Halpin 2007, 190). Thus, the Commission has crafted opportunities for non-state, non-governmental actors to discuss policy with decision-makers at various stages of the policy-making process. For instance, before the policy-making process is initiated, “the Commission must be aware of new situations and issues developing in Europe and it must consider whether the EU legislation is the best way to deal with them. That is why the Commission consults and is in constant touch with external parties when elaborating its policies” (European Commission 2012). As such, those groups which represent the interests of specific constituencies are encouraged specifically to become involved in discussion and debate, particularly during periods where policy is being initiated or evaluated for feasibility and coherence.

The responses of the EU institutions to calls for a democratization of the European Union has had a clear impact on civil society actors in the EU. Namely, the formal inclusion of civil society actors into the EU decision-making processes—such as through Article 11—has had the effect of legitimizing and assigning credibility to these organizations as valuable and

constructive actors in the EU. When this study refers to ‘institutionalized credibility,’ it is being suggested that civil society actors—including supranational think-tanks—have been assigned credible agency in the European public policy community. As such, civil society actors are not institutionally discriminated on the comparative basis of their perceived expertise or insight into pressing European public policy issues. Instead, all civil society actors are considered to possess value not just in their knowledge and expertise, but more so in their capacity to represent a constituency and directly articulate this constituency’s priorities to European policy-makers. Accordingly, even if these organizations do not formally interact with the institutional apparatus of the EU, they are nevertheless constitutionally recognized as legitimate and credible public policy ‘voices.’ This inherent legitimation afforded to supranational think-tanks through recognition by the EU institutions has had an important effect on the roles, priorities, and constituencies that supranational think-tanks pursue. Yet, it has previously been noted that supranational think-tanks do not engage in formal consultations with the European Commission which might seem to challenge the relevance of formal credibility afforded to supranational think-tanks. This institutionalized credibility, however, is far from irrelevant for supranational think-tanks. This point will now be elucidated more fully.

8.2.2—*Institutionalized Credibility and Think-Tanks*

Because supranational think-tanks have been legitimated and assigned credibility by the institutions of the EU—namely the Commission—they have not had the need to strategically prioritize some of the same roles and priorities that characterize American think-tanks. By contrast, though American think-tanks face an institutional arrangement that is hospitable—empirically and normatively—to non-governmental interaction, these organizations are not assigned the same formal institutional and constitutional legitimacy. As such, American think-

tanks have to devote considerable resources to creating the impression of credibility to both policy-makers and the broader public. Perhaps even more critically for their longevity, however, American think-tanks also have to be able to convince their donors—present and future—that their organizations possess the credibility to be acknowledged, validated, and ultimately consulted/retained by the policy-making community. If American think-tanks are not able to provide an indication that they are credible sources of expertise and capable of impacting the policy-making process, it is unlikely that donors would feel the impetus to donate funds to such an organization. Thus, American think-tanks have a vested interest in providing an impression of credibility, if not to the policy-making community, then certainly to their donors. By comparison, however, supranational think-tanks do not have the same pressure to affirm their credibility, as the institutions of the EU have already validated their legitimacy through the various engagement processes and constitutional provisions concerning civil society recognition and involvement in EU policy-making. In other words, ‘access’ to the policy-making process is completely open to all interested civil society actors. The formal credibility of supranational think-tanks, contrasted to the informal credibility American think-tanks have to actively and tangibly demonstrate, has informed aspects of their roles, priorities, and constituencies.

The principal contention here is that the institutional credibility afforded to supranational think-tanks has allowed these organizations to focus on those activities and outputs in which they have a comparative advantage and are able to add the most value to the European policy-making and public policy community. The corollary to this is that American think-tanks, through having to pursue, demonstrate, and affirm their own informal credibility, have necessarily had to orient certain activities and outputs to the enhancement of their public perception of credibility.

By operating in a public policy environment where civil society actors are recognized as possessing credibility and a capacity to engage with European policy-making alongside policy-makers (Grant 1993, 31), supranational think-tanks have been able to pursue those roles and priorities that best reflect the competences and resources of their respective organizations. Further, supranational think-tanks have also been able to direct their resources to those activities and outputs that provide the most utility and added value to the European policy-making and public policy communities, while also providing a benefit to think-tanks themselves. Thus, because supranational think-tanks operate from a ‘credibility-inherent’ starting point, they are able to pursue their most utilitarian and comparatively advantageous purpose, which is to say the creation and cultivation of policy networks. One means of gauging the explanatory value of such a statement is to pose a counterfactual: would supranational think-tanks pursue different roles, priorities, and strategies if their credibility was not inherently bestowed by the EU’s institutions? If supranational think-tanks were required to validate their credibility to the extent that American think-tanks are, it is conceivable to posit that these organizations would dedicate considerably more resources to their ‘knowledge management’ functions, as opposed to utilizing these activities/outputs mostly for the purposes of revenue-raising. Simultaneously, supranational think-tanks would not be able to devote as many resources to their policy networking efforts, as this activity does not provide an obvious or tangible credibility-enhancing impression. This counterfactual will now be briefly expanded upon.

If supranational think-tanks had to foster an impression of credibility independent of the EU’s institutions, this study suggests that supranational think-tanks would pursue markedly different strategies and roles. Namely, if credibility was not as ‘taken-for-granted’ as it presently is, supranational think-tanks would place considerably more emphasis on their ‘knowledge

management' activities and outputs, pursue engagement with the media, and devote fewer resources and attention to their capacity to facilitate policy networks. First, in terms of 'knowledge management,' and particularly the original research component to this role, supranational think-tanks would no longer pursue these activities and outputs for the principal purpose of revenue-raising. Instead, these organizations would necessarily place increased efforts on the dissemination and marketing of their scholarly output to a wide audience as a testament to their capacity to produce topical and scholarly research on policy matters affecting the EU. Thus, without an 'inherent credibility,' supranational think-tanks would likely need to significantly increase their prioritization of 'knowledge management' compared to their largely pecuniary value. Second, supranational think-tanks would need to develop a media strategy for the purposes of visibly promoting their recognized expertise and authority. At present, supranational think-tanks do not devote even a modest degree of their resources to engagement with the media, nor do they place particular emphasis on media visibility as an indication of their 'success.' Of course, when compared to the extremely media-centric strategy of many American think-tanks, supranational think-tanks represent a unique approach to the media among the global think-tank community. However, without an inherent credibility, supranational think-tanks would need to reach out to high visibility European media outlets which, given the pronounced diversity in language, media culture, and irrelevance of EU matters to much of the broader EU citizenry⁸, is no easy task. Nevertheless, to enhance their credibility, supranational think-tanks would need to demonstrate their expertise and 'knowledge management' roles through the European media. In short, in the absence of institutionalized credibility, the media would necessarily become a focal 'output constituency' for supranational think-tanks. Finally, supranational think-tanks would

⁸ It has become popular for pro-democratic deficit scholars to embrace the notion of the EU lacking a 'demos.' See, for instance, the work of Simon Hix (Hix 2008, 64).

need to devote fewer resources, or at least deprioritize, their principal role at present, which is to say facilitators of policy networks among public and private actors. The reason for this is that facilitating policy networks is not, in itself, a quintessential credibility-enhancing activity. By facilitating policy networks, supranational think-tanks are focused on engaging elite public and private actors under the auspices of the given think-tank, and allowing constructive discussion and interaction to take place. While this role is fundamental to supranational think-tanks in reality, for the purposes of providing an indication of credibility, facilitating policy networks does very little. Instead, facilitating policy networks does more to enhance the credibility of the networking actors—particularly for the non-governmental organizations’ interaction with policy-makers—than it does provide credibility to supranational think-tanks themselves.

Counterfactually, then, in the absence of institutionalized credibility, supranational think-tanks would necessarily need to alter their priorities and strategies to provide a solid indication of their credibility to output and donor constituencies. As such, it is plausible to posit that the institutionalized credibility from the EU has impacted the roles, priorities, and constituencies of supranational think-tanks. Indeed, it is further conceivable to suggest that, in the absence of institutionalized credibility, supranational think-tanks might possibly resemble the American think-tank model considerably more than they presently do.

Unlike supranational think-tanks, American think-tanks must devote resources, activities, and outputs to the promotion of their status as credible actors in the American policy-making and public policy communities. While pursuing credibility-enhancing activities and outputs can benefit American think-tanks in their perceptions of credibility by policy-makers and the broader public, this study suggests that the principal purpose (rather, necessity) behind the pursuit of credibility rests with the demand by donors for such an indication. Without an impression of

credibility, donors are unlikely to direct their financial resources to an organization that, without a sufficient indication of credibility, does not represent a visible and authoritative source of expertise and input into the policy-making process and public policy narratives. With an ever-expanding community of think-tanks, these organizations are constantly facing greater pressure to distinguish and differentiate themselves from each other. In the fight for funding, American think-tanks must demonstrate a credibility that donors can identify and use to inform their donation decisions. After all, donors do not seek to surrender their funds to organizations that do not possess a high degree of legitimacy and credibility, or provide the indication/promise thereof (in the case of emergent think-tanks). Accordingly, American think-tanks pursue certain activities that are particularly prone to creating an impression of credibility among the donor and, tangentially, the policy-making and public policy communities. Namely, testimony before congressional committees/sub-committees, producing and disseminating scholarly research, and interaction with the media are leveraged and marketed as indicative of a given think-tank's 'credibility.' It is not surprising, furthermore, that these three activities are particularly well-represented in annual reports and marketing materials targeted to donors. As will now be demonstrated, these three activities contribute their own particular benefits to fostering an image of think-tank credibility in the American context.

By testifying before congressional bodies, American think-tanks are able to assert that institutionalized policy-makers perceive the given think-tank as an authoritative source of expertise and knowledge on a particular policy area. Through direct, formal interaction with congressional bodies, American think-tanks are able to create an impression of institutional credibility. In other words, American think-tanks are able to provide the impression of recognition by policy-makers of the expertise and knowledge that a given think-tank possesses

and can provide to constructive ends in the policy-making process. The second principal credibility-enhancing activity American think-tanks pursue is the production and dissemination of scholarly research—original or, increasingly popular, ‘repackaged.’ Reminiscent of the earlier conceptualization of American think-tanks as ‘universities without students,’ the internal importance and resource devotion to producing/disseminating original scholarly research has wavered since these organizations started to adopt a more advocacy-oriented role (Abelson 2009, 31). However, the majority of American think-tanks still actively pursue a scholarly research agenda that involves the production and wide dissemination of research on pressing policy matters and public policy debates. Producing such research allow think-tanks not just the opportunity to affirm their credibility on the basis of academic contributions, but also provides a platform from which think-tanks can infuse their ideological underpinnings into a scholarly work. Producing scholarly research allows donor constituencies to recognize that American think-tanks possess expertise and knowledge that side-steps the temporal delays inherent in academic publishing, while also providing research that is more scholastically rigorous than mainstream media punditry and commentary. Therefore, think-tanks devote internal resources to the production and dissemination of scholarly research so as to heighten their impression of academic credibility. As Rich and Weaver note, “newspapers will decide which think tanks to consult based on whether the organizations have expertise and information that satisfy the needs brought on by external events” (Rich and Weaver 2000, 86).

Finally, American think-tanks pursue a heightened media profile, the result of which can serve to strengthen the impression of credibility of think-tanks. In short, then, American think-tanks must devote resources to manufacturing an impression of credibility, largely doing so

through congressional testimony (‘institutional credibility’), scholarly research output (‘academic credibility’), and interaction with the media (‘popular credibility’).

As with the discussion of supranational think-tanks and their inherent credibility, it is worthwhile to ask a similar counterfactual of the American think-tank community. Namely, if American think-tanks were conferred the same institutionalized credibility as supranational think-tanks, would they pursue the same roles, priorities, and stratagem? Notwithstanding the patent unlikelihood of such a situation, given the enormous think-tank community in the US, this study suggests that an institutionalized credibility of American think-tanks would lead to these organizations becoming even further obsessed with pursuing a heightened media presence. In effect, with institutionalized credibility, American think-tanks might be better understood as consultants to the media as their primary role, as these organizations would pursue such an intense media strategy to reach as wide a demographic as possible. Through exposure to an ever-widening audience, think-tanks would therefore be able to strategically expose their mandate, orientation, and scholars to potential donors. Concomitantly, the ‘knowledge management’ role and activities that supranational think-tanks presently treat as tertiary to their mandate would likely be similarly tangential to the American think-tank community. In other words, an institutionalized credibility might lead American think-tanks to further erode their function as ‘universities without students,’ as the scholarly activities (which, in themselves, are credibility-enhancing) would no longer be needed as an affirmation of these organization’s academic credibility and expertise. Thus, counterfactually, if American think-tanks were afforded the same institutionalized credibility as supranational think-tanks, it is likely that their prioritization of their media presence would reach a new apogee, while the traditionally scholarly think-tank

activities (i.e. ‘knowledge management’) would no longer need to be featured as prominently in think-tank marketing and resource devotion.

As this study has demonstrated, the extent to which think-tanks are afforded formal, institutionalized credibility by policy-making institutions has an impact on their roles, priorities, and stratagem. As a result of supranational think-tanks being recognized as legitimate, credible actors in the European policy-making process and public policy community, these organizations have not faced the compulsion to affirm and widely demonstrate their credibility to donors and other relevant actors. Without such credibility, however, supranational think-tanks may have otherwise had to significantly realign their priorities—this realignment would likely include a shift in priorities toward more ‘knowledge management’ outputs, and less emphasis on their capacity to facilitate policy networking. In actuality, though, an institutionalized credibility has allowed these organizations to focus on the roles, priorities, and strategies that are most contributive to European policy-making and best reflect the comparative advantage of these organizations: creating, facilitating, and sustaining policy networks among public and private policy-relevant actors in the EU. American think-tanks, however, have not faced the same institutionalized credibility as supranational think-tanks. As a result, American think-tanks have necessarily had to demonstrate and affirm their credibility to their donor constituencies, as it was argued that donors are unlikely to direct their funds to a think-tank that is not able to convey an image and provide evidence of their credibility. Thus, American think-tanks need to devote considerable resources and energies to the pursuit of activities and outputs that are likely to assuage the donor community of their capacity to exist as credible actors in an extremely crowded ‘marketplace of ideas.’ American think-tanks demonstrably devote considerable resources to engaging with congressional actors through committees/sub-committee testimony

while inculcating an increasingly acute media strategy that promotes their constantly-heightened visibility before the American populace. As such, because American think-tanks need to affirm their credibility to, above all, their donor constituency, it is necessary to pursue those activities and outputs that are likely to create such an impression. While institutional aspects of the American and supranational think-tank environment have had an important impact on their nature and functioning, the distinct political culture between these two geo-institutional contexts has also had an important influence on their respective think-tank communities.

8.3—Political Cultural Factors Affecting Think-Tank Behavior

When discussing the impact of political culture upon American and supranational think-tanks, there is an inherent degree of nuance and nebulosity that marks the inquiry. Political culture, unlike institutional responses and processes, does not present a neatly identifiable or methodologically discernible means of interrogation. Nevertheless, this study suggests it is the case that there is a distinctive difference in political culture between the US and EU. The present challenge, of course, is moving beyond anecdotal, superficial assertions of differentiated political culture, instead pointing to delineable fault-lines in divergent political cultures between these two geo-institutional contexts. Acknowledging the methodological and empirical issues in grappling with questions of political culture, this study nevertheless posits two principal divergences that have had an impact on the roles, priorities, and strategies of American and supranational think-tanks. First, it will be demonstrated that American political culture features a pluralist-capitalist orientation among civil society actors, while the EU is more pluralist-consociational in nature. These particular concepts, of course, will be explained in depth shortly. Second, American political culture is more adversarial in nature, while the EU aligns with more of a consensus-driven orientation.

8.3.1—*Pluralist Capitalist vs. Consociational Political Culture*

This study suggests that, in reference to civil society actors, American political culture demonstrates a pluralist capitalist orientation, while European political culture aligns with a pluralist consociational orientation. The purpose of this study is not to dwell on the minutiae of the forms and functions of political culture. However, because these terms represent *ad hoc* and original approaches to understanding the differentiated culture between the US and EU, it is important to unpack what these two different forms of political culture refer to and how they impact their respective think-tanks. It should first be clarified that the inclusion of the ‘pluralist’ designation to these forms of political culture is used to indicate that both American and European political culture is non-exclusionary. In other words, civil society actors do not face formal barriers to entry in the ‘marketplace of ideas,’ and thus civil society actors begin from the premise of an ‘equality of opportunity.’ Naturally, this does not necessarily guarantee an ‘equality of outcome’ for civil society actors seeking to have their voices heard. In this context, this study will suggest that a ‘pluralist capitalist’ political culture can simultaneously be referred to as an ‘individualist’ political culture, while a ‘consociational’ political culture can similarly be understood as representing a ‘collectivist’ norm. These terms will be used interchangeability at various points throughout this analysis.

The ‘pluralist capitalist’ aspect of American political culture represents, in simplest terms, the notion that non-governmental actors independently vie and compete for the attention of policy-makers in a ‘free marketplace of ideas.’ Think-tanks, and other civil society actors, seek to have their voices heard the ‘loudest’ by policy-makers, and an augmented resonance by one actor’s ‘voice’ lessens the resonance of other actors’ ‘voices.’ As such, think-tanks and civil society actors operate in a political culture marked by zero-sum gains, whereby a situation in

which a given think-tank is being afforded agency or traction in policy-making and public policy circles, other think-tanks and civil society actors are necessarily *not* being afforded such agency. As Smith notes in the shift toward the suitability of a ‘market’ metaphor for American think-tanks, “the metaphors of science and disinterested research that informed the creation and development of the first think tanks, have now given way to the metaphor of the market and its corollaries of promotion, advocacy, and intellectual combat. And the market metaphor has brought professionals in public relations and marketing onto the staffs of most think tanks” (Smith 1991, 194). From such a perspective, American think-tanks are most capable of adding value to the American public policy community by pursuing activities and outputs that allow them to be heard ‘louder’ than other think-tanks. With an ideological underpinning, American think-tanks possess their own particular views of the ideal direction of American public policy, the fruition of which would provide the most beneficial public policy outcomes (from the given think-tank’s perspective). As such, American think-tanks provide the most value, from an internal perspective, when their views and message are being broadcast and legitimated loudly and widely. It may appear ostensibly that the ‘pluralist capitalist’ title might seem to place greater salience on the former rather than the latter, but the zero-sum nature of American political culture warrants the inclusion of the ‘capitalist’ designation.

Such an element of political culture has, understandably, exerted an impact on the roles and priorities of American think-tanks. In particular, this study suggests that the ‘pluralist capitalist’ political culture has been particularly contributive in the push by American think-tanks toward the highly quantitative-driven benchmarks of success they exhibit. Because the American think-tank environment has become increasingly crowded, it has become incumbent for these organizations to market their success in terms of what they are doing vis-à-vis their counterparts.

By facing a hyper-competitive ‘marketplace of ideas’ marked by zero-sum successes, American think-tanks have directed their efforts to pursuing a strategy that best accentuates their successful indications of ‘influence.’ As a result, outputs and activities that are particularly well-represented quantitatively have become central to American think-tanks’ priorities and stratagem. As indicated in Chapter 4, two activities in particular have historically been utilized by think-tanks as quantitative representations of their influence: congressional testimony and media citations. Through these two activities, American think-tanks can easily tabulate and transmit objective accounts of their ‘success.’ It is, after all, straightforward for donors to scan a ‘by the numbers’ section that has become near-ubiquitously employed by think-tanks in marketing efforts, through which the number of times scholars have appeared in the media and testified before congressional bodies can easily be discerned and interpreted as indicators of ‘influence.’

This study suggests, then, that the ‘capitalist pluralist’ aspect of American political culture has spurred American think-tanks to adopt strategies that prioritize the pursuit and marketing of quantifiable activities and outputs. By being able to distinguish themselves from other think-tanks, American think-tanks are subsequently able to provide their donors with a basis to gauge the success of these organizations and determine whether their funds are best directed to one think-tank or another. Accordingly, the ‘pluralist capitalist’ aspect of American political culture is critical to understanding why American think-tanks have adopted quantitative-heavy activities, outputs, and marketing techniques to convey to the donor community.

Contrasted to the ‘pluralist capitalist’ element of American political culture, European political culture is marked by the prevalence of what might be understood as a ‘consociational’ aspect. Though the EU does not institutionally operate as a consociational political system, the same reforms that spurred the inclusion of civil society actors into EU policy-making have

sought to ensure that policy-makers hear all voices/constituencies within the EU equally. In principle, then, the EU approaches the inclusion of non-governmental actors in policy-making through a consociational paradigm. Thus, one of the predominant traits of EU policy-making has been to ensure that ‘no voice is left behind’ nor any particular constituency is able to speak with more amplification than another. Whether or not it is the case that certain constituencies are actually able to attract more attention from policy-makers, in principle and constitution the EU is committed to a wide and egalitarian representation of all interested voices in EU policy-making (Kluver 2013, 155). However, in large part, supranational think-tanks rarely engage in the formal consultative procedures that civil society actors are constitutionally entitled to. Here, this aspect of political culture has significant explanatory capacity in understanding why supranational think-tanks do not engage with policy-makers through a formal, institutional means. Namely, supranational think-tanks do not represent a delineable constituency nor is their primary purpose contingent on the particular direction of EU-level policy-making. As such, without a constituency nor a vested interest in particular policy outcomes (at least to the extent that such policy does not impact the capacity of think-tanks to continue their operations), supranational think-tanks would not derive significant benefit from engagement in EU consultative processes. Instead, supranational think-tanks derive considerable benefit from the facilitation of policy networking among actors which, although they might interact with each other through consultative mechanisms, benefit from non-institutional, informal interaction through think-tank fora.

From this perspective, supranational think-tanks see their capacity to add value to the EU public policy community as being maximized by facilitating the creation and maintenance of constructive policy networks among public and private actors. Accordingly, the main value-

added activity that supranational think-tanks provide—and prioritize—is the facilitation of policy networks in the EU. As demonstrated, the ‘consociational’ element to European political culture (at the EU level) can aid our understanding of why supranational think-tanks do not engage in formal consultations, and why policy networking is a particularly desirable function that think-tanks can provide to policy-makers and civil society actors.

8.3.2—*Adversarial vs. Consensual Political Culture*

Another distinction between American and European political culture can be found along an adversarial-consensual spectrum. Specifically, this study alleges that the adversarial nature of American and the more consensus-driven European political culture have had an important impact upon their respective think-tank communities. Although these two aspects may appear to be ideal-types, it is perhaps more constructive to view these two elements as poles along a spectrum. Quite clearly, neither the American nor the European political culture can be reduced to such a wholesale concept, and both have elements of adversarial and consensus-building qualities. Yet, while the American and European political cultures do not represent ideal-type poles, it will be asserted that there is a clear separation along the aforementioned spectrum.

‘Adversarial politics’ has become a popular designation of the American political system, especially as the US has contemporarily come to be increasingly defined in binary, dualistic terms (Jacobson 2013, 688; Doherty 2014). This study suggests that this feature of the American political system can also be applied as an accurate and appropriate descriptor of American political culture. As it concerns think-tanks, an adversarial political culture entails the increasing pressure for think-tanks to adopt a particular mandate, ideology, and strategy, while actively promulgating these convictions. As such, the adversarial nature can be understood as underlying several aspects of the American think-tank experience. In particular, this study identifies a

particularly dominant principal impact that adversarialism has exerted on American think-tanks. Namely, the increasingly unabashed ideological orientation of American think-tanks can, in part, be attributed to the adversarial political culture they function within (and, arguably, constitute). As the ideological composition of the American political system has become increasingly reflective of a Manichean, ‘us versus them’ ethos and public policy dialogue, think-tanks have responded to this polarization (or, perhaps, have in part contributed to the polarization). Namely, American think-tanks have increasingly come to adopt a distinguishable and delineable ideological underpinning to their activities and outputs. Though it is likely the case that American think-tanks possessed ideological foundations and biases before the contemporary period, it is nonetheless evident that the present American think-tanks have unapologetically oriented their outputs toward ideological ends, and many have explicitly identified their ideological predispositions in their mission statements and marketing materials. Thus, as the American political system has come to be most appropriately defined in polar terms, so too have American think-tanks inherited the impetus to align with a particular ideological orientation. Thus, adversarialism in the US has pushed American think-tanks toward embracing and marketing their particular ideological underpinning in a more deliberate and explicit sense.

Supranational think-tanks, by contrast, face a very different political culture in terms of the adversarial-consensual spectrum. While American political culture might be understood as straddling the extremities of the adversarial pole, European political culture is equally distant from the ‘center’ and is therefore largely consensus-driven. While there are certainly many EU member states that have a strong tradition of adversarial politics,⁹ the European Union itself does

⁹ The United Kingdom, for example, has often been touted as a quintessential case-study of ‘adversarial politics’ (Berrington 2003).

not represent a particularly hospitable environment for adversarial politics to take place. Within the European Parliament, though, there is a growing European ‘conversation’ taking place that may at times appear adversarial (Hix 2008, 118). However, within the European Commission, there is little evidence of adversarial politics having any descriptive value. Much like the American spill-over of institutional adversarialism into the concomitant political culture, this study suggests that the consensus-driven institutional motif of the EU has also informed the political culture of the EU. As such, the EU is marked by the wide inclusion of actors with vested interests in policy-making, with a wide representation of constituencies favored over executive-driven policy-making (Aspinwall 1998, 197). This study suggests that the consensus-driven aspect in Europe has encouraged supranational think-tanks to pursue their principal role as facilitators of policy networks. Further, not only are supranational think-tanks incentivized to pursue their role as curators of policy networks, but they are also able to provide an added-value role to the European public policy community that is beneficial and contributory to the European political culture of consensus-building. By providing fora for policy-makers and non-governmental actors to integrate and interact, the mandate of the EU to promote public-private discussion and partnership can be facilitated outside the formal channels of the EU. Though many civil society actors do choose to engage with policy-makers through these formal institutional channels, interactions among these actors in an informal, neutral setting provided by supranational think-tanks allows policy-makers to be exposed to more ‘voices’ without the formal conventions of such a process through the EU institutions. Here, supranational think-tanks are most able to fulfill their comparative advantage in the EU public policy community. At the same time, policy-makers are able to glean a more holistic, wide-reaching array of viewpoints on a given policy issue or priority. Whereas time and other limitations during formal

consultative processes might limit the ability of civil society actors to present their version of the ‘whole story,’ interacting with policy-makers within supranational think-tanks can lend to a more informal, unhurried manner of interaction that affords a genuine exchange of knowledge and insight between policy-relevant actors. In short, the consensus-building motif that is central to a European political culture has encouraged supranational think-tanks to pursue their primary role—facilitators of policy networks—and be able to fulfill their comparative advantage in the EU public policy community. Clearly (and as presented in Table 3 below), the divergent political cultures of the US and EU have had important impacts on the activities, outputs, and stratagem of their respective think-tank communities.

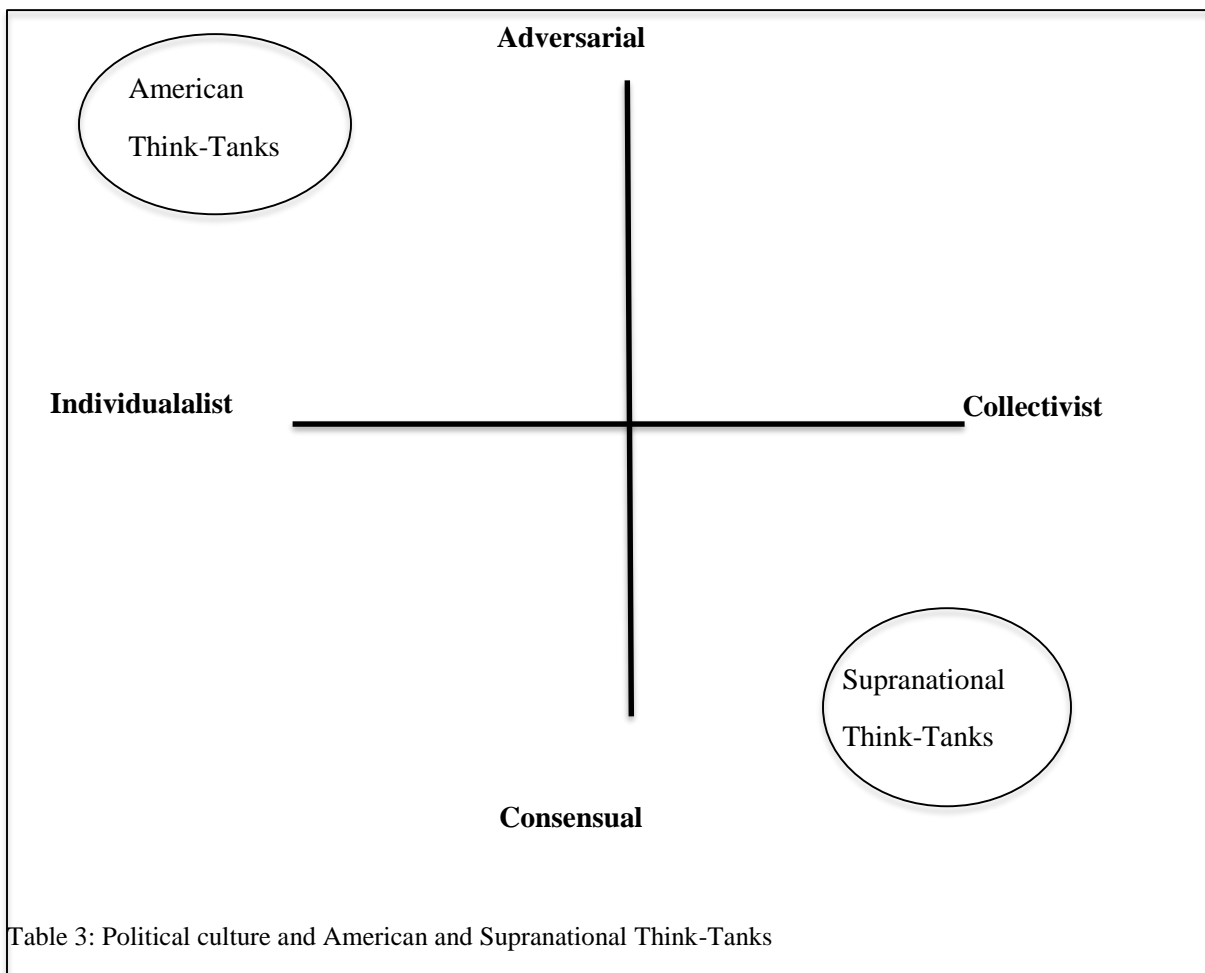


Table 3: Political culture and American and Supranational Think-Tanks

8.4—Further Implications of Institutional and Political Culture Differences

The previous and present chapter has been dedicated to identifying and seeking to explain some of the most pronounced divergences between the American and supranational think-tank communities. For the first time in the scholarly literature on think-tanks, American and supranational think-tanks were analytically and systematically compared against one another, with institutional and political culture aspects having particular salience in understanding the different trajectories they have followed. It was demonstrated that both institutional and political culture aspects have preordained American and supranational think-tanks toward certain roles, priorities, and constituencies, while simultaneously including considerations of funding and what their respective donors expect from these organizations. The purpose now is to explore some of the implications and broader impacts that these principal explanatory variables have exerted on the American and supranational think-tank communities. In particular, this study will identify three principal implications that emerge from the preceding consideration of the causes of divergences between American and supranational think-tanks: competition, impetus for original policy solutions, and broader vertical and horizontal collaboration between think-tanks.

8.4.1—Think-Tanks and Competition

One need not look far beyond annual reports, marketing material, or media citations to glean the truism that there are asymmetrical degrees of competitiveness between the American and supranational think-tank environments. This study suggests that the institutional and political culture differences between American and supranational think-tanks have impacted the extent to which these think-tank communities can be said to represent a competitive ‘marketplace.’ Specifically, it will be suggested that American think-tanks have forged a highly competitive environment, whereas supranational think-tanks have faced an environment that has largely been

apathetic, or even averse, to the introduction of a competitive dimension. Namely, the demand for credibility, American political culture, and donor demands have fomented a highly competitive American think-tank environment. Through their existence in an adversarial, independent-driven political culture marked by the need to affirm their credibility to policy-makers and the broader public, American think-tanks have naturally fomented an environment marked by intense competition. The heightened competition of the American think-tank environment can be explained largely through the aforementioned institutional and political culture perspectives, and particularly the effect these variables have had on the nature of the think-tank donor community.

First, by having to validate their credibility to donors and the policy-making community, American think-tanks pursue activities and outputs that can articulate an impression of credibility to a wide audience. As was previously indicated, the main vehicles through which this takes place are testimony before congress and heightened interaction with the media. In both of these realms, there is an intense competition for ‘air-time’ before both congress and the media, and American think-tanks dedicate considerable resources to ensuring their organization is well-represented in both these high-visibility activities. Thus, the incumbency of providing an impression of credibility has spurred an extremely competitive push for documentable think-tank representation through the media and before congressional bodies.

From a political culture perspective, the adversarial, individual value-oriented nature of American political culture has also contributed to an acute competitiveness in the American think-tank community. By operating in a political culture that places such emphasis on a zero-sum, ‘winner-take-all’ ethos, American think-tanks must necessarily focus on those activities and outputs that are going to allow them to distinguish and differentiate themselves from their

competitors (i.e. other think-tanks) and be able to provide adequate evidence of such success. Understandably, such an ethos creates an extremely competitive environment where the visibility of one think-tank in the media or before a congressional committee represents a lost opportunity for another think-tank to garner the associated exposure from such activities. As such, some of the major constituent elements of American political culture—individual value-optimization and adversarial politics—have contributed to a heightened competitiveness among American think-tanks.

A third contributor to the competitiveness of the American think-tank environment relates to the demands of the donor community. While the demands of donors can be associated with both the institutional and political culture aspects previously considered, this study suggests that the imperatives of the donor community on think-tank activity and priorities deserve special consideration. After all, without a donor community, American think-tanks would face an immediately precarious operational short-term future, even for those organizations with considerable endowments. While American think-tanks have historically benefitted from a generous donor community, this is not to suggest that the competition for funds and allegiance of donors has not been fierce and sustained. As generous as the donor community in the US might appear, there is a finite degree of resources that think-tanks must compete for and donors can easily alter the direction of their resources from one think-tank to another. As a result, think-tanks have an urgent and constant imperative to both expand their donor community while simultaneously providing evidence to their existing and prospective donors of the discernible, definite impact their think-tank has exerted on the US public policy and policy-making communities. So, given a finite ‘pool’ of financial resources think-tanks vie for and the pressures

by donors to derive a tangible ‘return on investment,’ the donor community has had an important role in fuelling the hyper-competitive American think-tank environment.

Compared to the American think-tank community, supranational think-tanks function within a considerably less competitive think-tank environment, and this has not gone unnoticed. Ullrich, for example, suggests “except when they are bidding for the same project, there is little competition,” which “may be the cause of weakness among the Brussels-based think-tanks” (Ullrich 2004, 56). *The Economist* even went so far as to suggest “with some honorable exceptions, most think-tanks in Brussels are just not very good” (*The Economist*, “The dodgy Side,” 2009). In particular, this study suggests that the institutionalized credibility and institutional funding that has been afforded to supranational think-tanks has limited the potentiality and even utility of a more competitive think-tank environment. Importantly, however, various ‘demographic’ elements of the supranational think-tank community have resulted in the evasion of a more competitive environment. Principally, the universe of the think-tank communities in the US and EU represent vastly different populations. Whereas the US is home to the largest number of think-tanks in the world, the supranational think-tank community, by comparison, is considerably younger and smaller. Whereas the US think-tanks are in competition with thousands of other organizations seeking the same means to the same ends, the supranational think-tank community represents a considerably smaller population (this study has identified 22). Thus, simply by virtue of a smaller number of organizations with access to a diversity of funding sources, there is less of a presumption, or actuality, of a competitive think-tank community.

By having a preordained legitimation and credibility from the institutions of the EU, supranational think-tanks do not feel the impetus to focus on those activities that enhance their

public credibility profiles. Of these activities, the means that American think-tanks have had to pursue to ‘prove’ their credibility—media interaction and congressional testimony—are not as important to the stratagem of supranational think-tanks. Because supranational think-tanks have been afforded credibility ‘on arrival,’ they have concomitantly focused on those activities that optimize their comparative advantage and provide added value to the European public policy community. Namely, the pursuit of facilitating policy networks—not, in itself, a resounding demonstration of credibility—has become fundamental to supranational think-tanks’ mandate *as a result of* the inherent credibility these organizations have been granted. Thus, because supranational think-tanks do not have the necessary demand to competitively pursue credibility-enhancing activities/outputs in the same way American think-tanks do, there is little incentive for these organizations to pursue some of the more traditionally competitive think-tank activities, such as obsessing over media visibility and securing the formal attention of policy-makers. Without the institutionalized credibility, supranational think-tanks would need to validate their credibility and legitimacy to both their ‘output constituencies’ (policy-makers and EU public policy actors) and, importantly, their main ‘donor constituency’ (private, for-profit organizations). Inevitably, such a demand for demonstrations of credibility would involve attempts by supranational think-tanks to articulate their ‘knowledge management’ activities/outputs to a wide audience, predominantly through the media. Presently, however, supranational think-tanks exhibit very little prioritization or interest in pursuing a high-visibility media profile, especially when compared to American think-tanks. Therefore, this study suggests that the credibility that has been afforded to supranational think-tanks by virtue of the EU institutions has allowed these organizations to pursue activities that are value-optimizing and, furthermore, do not foster a highly competitive think-tank environment.

8.4.2—*Think-Tanks and Original Policy Solutions*

The second principal implication that this study reveals from considerations of ‘how’ and ‘why’ American and supranational think-tanks differ surrounds the centrality of promulgating original policy solutions. In particular, it will be argued that American think-tanks have faced pressure to articulate ostensibly novel policy solutions (original or ‘repackaged’), while supranational think-tanks have, in actuality, been dissuaded from doing so.

American think-tanks have pursued an active ‘knowledge management’ strategy that involves the dissemination of research, of both an original and ‘repackaged’ variety. Whereas supranational think-tanks pursue ‘knowledge management’ activities/outputs largely for the purposes of monetary gain, American think-tanks pursue these activities/outputs primarily as a means for enhancing their credibility among policy-makers, the media, and their broader donor constituencies. By producing and disseminating research on topical policy debates and directions, American think-tanks are able to demonstrate to the policy-making community that they are capable of providing a (however genuinely) scholarly interpretation of the major policy discussions at a given time. With a demonstration of the ability to provide such expertise to the public policy community, American think-tanks are able to highlight their scholarly credentials to policy-makers and, thus, are more well-suited to deliver expert-driven testimony before institutional bodies, namely congressional committees/sub-committees. Thus, by affirming their capacity to produce original scholarly research, American think-tanks are able to provide an indication to policy-makers that they can provide expert, academic-driven knowledge on pressing policy matters. While American think-tanks’ research priorities might not contemporarily represent the scholastic and academic nature of publications that defined

previous eras of think-tank research, think-tanks are still fundamentally focused on providing the *impression* of such academic credibility to policy-makers.

The second principal aspect that has impressed importance upon maintaining a ‘knowledge management’ agenda for American think-tanks is the capacity of their research to be cited and referenced throughout the media. The media is a natural constituency for the dissemination of think-tank research, as media outlets themselves are enhanced by the reporting and discussion of poignant and topical policy issues. Media outlets themselves, however, are typically not able to provide the analytical depth and scholarly research on public policy matters that think-tanks can provide. As such, in reporting and discussing topical policy issues, the media frequently turns to external actors in their attempt to provide the most authoritative and credible sources on a given area of discussion. When think-tanks are able to provide digestible (though insightful) research on matters of public policy interest, the media is particularly likely to reference and engage with the given think-tank on their research output. Once again, whether or not the think-tank research represents an original contribution to scholarly literature is a distantly tertiary consideration. Instead, it is incumbent upon American think-tanks to pursue research outputs that articulate the particular ideological interpretation of a given policy topic within a scholarly veneer, as the production and dissemination of overly-theoretical, academic jargon-ridden research is unlikely to translate well into the output priorities of the media (such as wide accessibility and comprehension). As such, American think-tanks are incentivized to produce original scholarly research that can be easily comprehended and disseminated by the media to a wider audience.

The final ‘push’ factor that American think-tanks face in producing original scholarly research rests with the expectations and demands of their donor constituencies. As has become

abundantly apparent throughout this study thus far, the importance of think-tanks' 'donor constituencies' is particularly acute and critical in the American context. Donors to American think-tanks expect these organizations to represent credible actors in the American public policy community, and one of the means that this is demonstrated is through the production and dissemination of scholarly research. Donors want an impression that their funded think-tank will be able to regulate the narratives on public policy issues, and one way this takes place is through the publication of apropos research. By publishing and advocating for original or existing policy solutions through their research, American think-tanks are able to demonstrate to their donors that their funds are being used for shaping the direction of policy from an original scholarly research perspective. Think-tanks need to demonstrate to their donors that their publications are not just a 'cottage industry' of contemporary think-tanks, but rather that these publications serve as a significant basis for policy-makers' priorities, parameters of debate, and implementation in new or existing policy. In short, as a result of expectations and pressures from policy-makers, the media, and their donor constituencies, American think-tanks have faced a clear incentive to produce and disseminate original policy solutions through scholarly research.

In stark contrast to the American think-tank experience, supranational think-tanks have not faced an ardent incentive or impetus to produce and widely disseminate original policy solutions. However, as was previously indicated, supranational think-tanks do devote resources to the facilitation of 'knowledge management' outputs, particularly the production and dissemination of original research. Yet, such research is a fractional priority and composition of supranational think-tanks' resource devotion and marketing salience. As previously mentioned, the 'knowledge management' function of supranational think-tanks is largely a revenue-raising tool, and these organizations simply do not have the capacity to produce original research on the

scale and consistency of American think-tanks. Perhaps, as some have suggested, this is because “too many of their analysts are not real researchers or academics, but former journalists” (*The Economist*, “The dodgy side,” 2009). Thus, while supranational think-tanks do pursue the dissemination of original scholarly research, the emphasis and scale of such research is weaker in comparison to the American think-tank experience.

Specifically, as a result of the institutionalized credibility that supranational think-tanks have been afforded, there is no burden upon these organizations to validate and prove their ‘knowledge management’ outputs for enhancing their academic credibility. Resultantly, the number of publications, diversity of publications, and citations of publications (for example) are not benchmarks that are particularly important to supranational think-tanks’ conceptualization of ‘success.’ In the American think-tank context, however, we have seen that such indicators (especially those with a quantitative orientation) are particularly favorable to think-tanks in their marketing and fundraising efforts. It is not surprising, given the relatively low priority of original scholarly for supranational think-tanks, that many of the individuals working at these organizations (as full-time researchers) do not possess a doctorate or professional degree. Though the number of doctorates working at American think-tanks has declined significantly in recent decades (Troy 2012, 86), many of the authors penning the original scholarly research emanating from American think-tanks do have a doctorate or an advanced degree. Though it might seem that such an observation of the titular designation of think-tank scholars is superficial and otherwise unrepresentative of the quality of scholarly output, this study nonetheless maintains that the disparity in doctorates between American and supranational think-tanks is a telling indication of the internal prioritization of original scholarly research and output. Accordingly, supranational think-tanks do not provide an indication that the production and

dissemination of original scholarly research is central to their stratagem. It can be plausibly discerned, as posited, that the institutionalized credibility that has been granted to supranational think-tanks has allowed them to bypass the need for defending and proving their scholastic credibility. Clearly, such a luxury has not been afforded to American think-tanks, as evidenced by a robust scholarly output of original or ‘repackaged’ research.

American and supranational think-tanks have demonstrated divergent internal prioritizations of original scholarly research, alongside a divergence in the function of such outputs. Whereas American think-tanks pursue original scholarly research for the purposes of affirming their credibility to policy-makers, the media, and their donor constituencies, supranational think-tanks utilize original research as a revenue-raising commodity for policy-interested actors and the broader public. From an explanatory perspective, it was revealed that American think-tanks disseminate original scholarly research as a credibility-enhancing medium, while supranational think-tanks sparingly devote resources to ‘knowledge management’ as their credibility has already been validated by the institutions of the EU. As such, in terms of credibility, supranational think-tanks do not need to ‘sell’ something (credibility) that has already been bought (by the EU institutions).

8.4.3—Think-Tanks and Collaboration

The final principal implication this study deduces from the preceding analysis surrounds horizontal and vertical collaboration between American and supranational think-tanks and their counterparts domestically and internationally. In this instance, ‘horizontal collaboration’ refers to collaboration among think-tanks within the same ‘level’ of governance. ‘Vertical collaboration,’ by contrast, refers to collaboration between think-tanks at different levels of governance. For example, collaboration between supranational think-tanks represents ‘horizontal collaboration,’

while these same think-tanks' interaction with a domestic think-tank would represent 'vertical collaboration.' It should be noted, however, that neither American nor supranational think-tanks demonstrate a propensity toward horizontal collaboration between their respective think-tank communities. While the reasons for American think-tanks' isolationism is more easily explained vis-à-vis their highly competitive, individualist stratagem, supranational think-tanks might *prima facie* represent an opportune think-tank model for promoting and fostering collaboration amongst themselves. Yet, there is little evidence for this taking place, nor is there evidence of such a goal being salient for these organizations. However, as this analysis will now reveal, supranational think-tanks do extensively vertically collaborate with other think-tanks, specifically in EU member states. American think-tanks, however, rarely collaborate with other civil society actors, and there is little evidence for such a desire among these organizations. These different collaborative environments will be discussed, alongside relevant explanatory variables.

As supranational think-tanks are primarily focused on creating and fostering policy networks within the European public policy community, it is perhaps not surprising that collaboration between other civil society actors occurs. This study does not consider collaboration as involving the gathering of policy-relevant actors under the roof of a think-tank, but rather the engaging in mutually-beneficial arrangements and relationships to advance each actor's goals. As such, supranational think-tanks do not collaborate extensively (or even determinately, in the majority of cases) with other supranational think-tanks. However, these organizations do, to varying degrees, collaborate with think-tanks in member states of the EU. In collaborating with member state think tanks, supranational think-tanks are able to extract certain benefits, which will be discussed.

Though the majority of European member-state think-tanks tend to cluster within the ‘big three’ member states (France, Germany, and the UK), supranational think-tanks have forged connections between think-tanks throughout many of the EU’s 28 member states. For example, according to EPC, “as part of its aim to broaden the EPC’s outreach beyond Brussels, the EPC has established active working partnerships with a number of think tanks (or comparable bodies) in the Member States in order to carry out joint work on themes that are relevant to the European policy debate” (EPC 2016). Similarly, Bruegel maintains active ‘private research partnerships’ between think-tanks in member states, including some of the more nascent democracies and think-tank communities, such as Hungary and Slovenia (Bruegel 2016). The rational implication, of course, is that supranational think-tanks and member state think-tanks each derive some benefit from their collaboration efforts.

Namely, collaborating with member state think-tanks allows supranational think-tanks to heighten their visibility among actors and organizations with a European dimension to their work or interest in European affairs. Through a heightened visibility among the member states, organizations and corporations seeking to ‘upload’ their activities and interests to the EU level can utilize supranational think-tanks as a platform for doing so. For example, as a member state corporation might have difficulty in beginning a relationship with European policy-makers, supranational think-tanks can facilitate policy networking between such a corporation and relevant policy-makers in the EU. In this sense, collaborating with member state think-tanks provides significant positive externalities in marketing and raising awareness of the capabilities of supranational think-tanks in fostering policy networks at the EU level. Thus, by heightening their visibility to organizations in member states, supranational think-tanks are able to expand

their marketing efforts to organizations seeking to have a ‘voice’ at the EU level (and, naturally, benefit from financially lucrative membership creation).

Furthermore, heightening their visibility at the member state level allows supranational think-tanks to expose their revenue-raising ‘knowledge management’ activities and outputs to a wider audience. For instance, in various ‘pay-for-play’ seminars and summits that supranational think-tanks host and coordinate, spreading awareness of these activities to a wider audience augments the opportunity for the financial success of these outputs/activities by virtue of a wider marketing audience. Thus, as a result of collaboration allowing supranational think-tanks to “be more present in the national debates through joint events and publications” (EPC 2016), the lucrative revenue-raising outputs and activities can be promoted and even fulfilled at the domestic level as well. As supranational think-tanks face an uncertain financial future—at the time of writing, for instance, FRIDE (founded in 1999) ceased operations for reasons of financial insecurity (FRIDE 2015)—opportunities to expand their ‘knowledge management’ activities and outputs to the member state level are a welcome, and rare, opportunity for significant revenue growth.

Of course, supranational think-tanks are not the sole beneficiaries from collaboration between these two think-tank communities. Member state think-tanks, for their part, welcome the opportunity to become an active part of the larger discussion on public policy in the EU, as distinct from their otherwise domestic or regional focus. As such, collaborating with supranational think-tanks gives “national think tanks a platform to present their ideas to EU policymakers, opinion formers and other stakeholders active in the EU debate” (EPC 2016). In events and publications coordinated with supranational think-tanks, member state think-tanks have a platform upon which to upload their priorities and goals to another level of governance

which, as a further benefit, provides an indication to their donors and supporters that they are integrating themselves in the broader discussion surrounding the direction of EU-level public policy. Accordingly, collaboration between supranational and member state think-tanks has allowed for the development of a mutually-beneficial relationship. The desire for supranational think-tanks to expand their policy network and the reach of their revenue-raising ‘knowledge management’ activities/outputs can be facilitated through interactions at the member state level, while domestic think-tanks benefit from the opportunity to have their ‘voice’ heard on the broader European stage. Thus, supranational think-tanks demonstrate a propensity to vertical collaboration with think-tank communities, with little indication of horizontal collaboration being a priority, or even taking place.

American think-tanks, for their part, do not exude evidence of inter-think-tank collaboration taking place, nor is there evidence to suggest that this is an unrequited desire for these organizations. In light of the previous discussion on the institutional and political culture dimensions to the American think-tank community, however, such an attitude toward collaboration is understandable and not altogether surprising. It has been demonstrated that American think-tanks need to independently affirm their credibility to policy-makers, the media, and especially their donors. In the quantitative-driven benchmarks of ‘success’ that has come to be a defining feature of the American think-tank community, collaboration with other think-tanks would relinquish an opportunity for a single think-tank to attract attention to the specific output/activity of that think-tank. In other words, collaboration with other think-tanks implies that any indication of ‘success’ that might be born of that collaboration is inherently marketable by all of the parties involved. Thus, collaboration among American think-tanks challenges the opportunity for a single think-tank to demonstrate its exceptional characteristics and outputs

among the American think-tank community. With donors looking to give to think-tanks that are able to provide an impression of ‘influence’ and credibility, ‘sharing’ successes with other think-tanks challenges the opportunity for a think-tank to make a compelling case for its exceptionalism, and thus suitability for donor funding. From an institutional perspective, then, collaborating with other think-tanks is not a compelling strategy for American think-tanks seeking to optimize their impression of ‘influence’ and credibility—these two elements, as previously indicated, are particularly critical to think-tank survival in the US.

From a political culture perspective, furthermore, it is also possible to understand why American think-tanks do not pursue horizontal collaboration. As previously mentioned, American political culture, as it relates to think-tanks, is marked by individualism, adversarialism, and hyper-competitiveness. Given that American think-tanks are self-maximizing and, by virtue of hyper-quantification, easily able to be compared and judged against one another, there is little incentive for these organizations to collaborate. Though itself difficult to quantify, this study nevertheless suggests that the political culture of the US has dissuaded American think-tanks from ‘sharing’ in the successful impression of ‘influence’ and credibility. Funders and donors are not looking for evidence that think-tanks are able to ‘get along’ with each other—in fact, the case could be made that many funders/donors might see this as a weakness. Instead, donors are looking to support organizations that demonstrate a capacity to impact the policy-making and public policy community, independent of the collaboration and help of other organizations. As such, in addition to a political cultural predisposition against horizontal collaboration, American think-tanks might actually have a disincentive to collaborate as a result of their donors’ desire for evidence and an impression of singular success.

Clearly, the prioritization and importance of collaboration is asymmetrically distributed between the American and supranational think-tank communities. While neither American nor supranational think-tanks demonstrate a propensity toward horizontal collaboration, supranational think-tanks have a policy networking and monetary incentive to collaborate vertically between member state think-tanks, with the latter taking place largely through the dissemination and attraction of member state actors to ‘knowledge management’ activities and outputs. Member state think-tanks, for their part, benefit from collaboration due to the ability to extend and ‘upload’ their message to the European platform that supranational think-tanks function within. American think-tanks, by virtue of the institutional and political cultural environment within which they operate, and the implications of this on donor demands, might actually be disincentivized from engaging in collaboration.

8.5—Conclusion

The preceding and current chapter represents the principal original contribution that this study will make to the scholarly literature on American and supranational think-tanks. Namely, the comparative approach to studying American and supranational think-tanks, heretofore absent in the scholarly literature, has been attempted for the first time, to this author’s knowledge. The purpose of this chapter was two-fold. First, it was asked why American and supranational think-tanks have pursued such markedly differentiated trajectories in regards to, among other factors, their roles, priorities, and stratagem. Two principal explanatory frameworks were posited as holding particular credence in this comparison: an institutional and political culture perspective.

From an institutional perspective, it was demonstrated that the institutional credibility that has been afforded to supranational think-tanks has had an important impact on the freedom with which they can pursue their most value-added and comparatively advantageous

activities/outputs. The absence of a formal institutionalized credibility in the American case, however, has required American think-tanks to independently validate and demonstrate evidence of credibility to their salient constituencies. Such an absence of institutionalized credibility is one element that has contributed to the hyper-quantification of outputs and benchmarks that American think-tanks have pursued and employed in evaluating their ‘success.’

In addition to an institutional explanation, the differences in political culture between the US and EU has impacted the roles, priorities, and stratagem of think-tanks in these two geo-institutional contexts. In particular, two principal binaries of political culture were considered – capitalist (individualist) vs. consociational (collectivist) and adversarial vs. consensus-driven—as important influences on think-tank behavior. The adversarial, individualist orientation that defines American political culture has encouraged American think-tanks to foment a hyper-competitive, quantitative-driven think-tank environment. On the other hand, the collectivist, consensus-driven political culture eminent within the EU has incentivized and rewarded supranational think-tanks that are able to cultivate enhanced relationships between key stakeholders and add value to the EU policy-making process. Thus, through this chapter, it was demonstrated that both an institutional and political culture framework are particularly helpful in explaining why American and supranational think-tanks have developed along different developmental paths.

After offering an explanatory framework, this chapter then posited some of the major implications to emerge from such an understanding of the causes of think-tank divergence in the American and supranational cases. In particular, three major implications were revealed. First, it was suggested that the competitiveness of the American and supranational think-tank environments has been significantly impacted by the combination of institutional and political

culture explanations of differentiation. In particular, the institutional and political culture impacts on the roles, priorities, and stratagem of American think-tanks has fomented a highly-competitive think-tank environment, while the supranational think-tank community has averted the hyper-competitiveness of their American peers. Second, the impetus for producing and disseminating original scholarly research is similarly impacted by institutional and political culture explanations. Specifically, it was demonstrated that the American think-tank community has a clear incentive to pursue original scholarly research—largely for the purposes of credibility-enhancement—while supranational think-tanks do not face the same incentives to pursue a particularly robust and consistent scholarly research agenda. Finally, it was elucidated that supranational think-tanks have an incentive to collaborate with other think-tanks (largely within the member state context), while the institutional and political cultural dimension to the American think-tank community has dissuaded these organizations from pursuing collaboration. It is quite possible, furthermore, that such collaboration would be damaging to American think-tanks' individual sustenance.

As has been demonstrated up to and including this chapter, American and supranational think-tanks represent considerably different think-tank models. After exploring some of the explanatory factors behind this differentiation, however, it has become clear that such differences are not altogether surprising. After exploring the institutional and political culture diversity between the American and supranational public policy communities, it might actually be expected that such differences would manifest in the behavior of their think-tank communities. Yet, the magnitude of differences between these two think-tank models are not as readily obvious or easily explainable at first glance. Through the original contribution of this dissertation, hopefully such differences between American and supranational think-tanks are not

presumed and ‘taken for granted,’ but can now rather be understood through an analytically comparative and explanatory approach. It is worth closing this chapter with an exchange that occurred between a columnist for *The Economist* and a European ‘think-tanker,’ Hugo Brady. In responding to the columnist’s condemnation of supranational think-tanks as impotent and un-Americanized, Brady wrote:

lots of think-tanks don’t really see why they should be influencing the [European Union] debate at all. That might leave you and me gob-smacked as to why the hell they exist but then lots of places call themselves ‘think-tanks’ when they are actually closer to being academic ‘policy institutes’, or sometimes simply ‘forums’. These tend to produce little or no original research. Most see their job as providing a learned academic forum where people can hear from politicians, officials and academics about what is going on in international affairs. They might produce the odd paper here and there but these are really summaries, not analyses. Many would be shocked if a government came to them and asked them to recommend what the next steps should be in EU-Russians affairs, for example. They would be likely to produce something with as many footnotes as possible that would merely prattle back to government officials the documents they themselves have already produced. To them, governments know everything already (*The Economist*, “Charlemagne’s grouching,” 2009).

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

At first glance, American and supranational think-tanks might seem to be comfortable bedfellows and naturally share the same titular designation as ‘think-tanks.’ Understandably, a casual observer of these two organizations would not be outlandish in making such a comparison—with a roster of highly-educated individuals integrated in the public policy communities in both cases, there is an undeniable resemblance between American and supranational think-tanks. Further, a visit to the webpage or even physical edifice of an American or supranational think-tank might not warrant the disparate claims that have been made throughout this study. Yet, for what might appear to be a *prima facie* symmetry, these two think-tank environments are markedly different. This study, above all, sought to identify, analyze, and offer an explanation as to why American and supranational think-tanks have evolved as two strikingly different think-tank models.

This study began from the observation that supranational think-tanks have pursued roles, priorities, activities, and constituencies that do not demonstrate a compelling resemblance to the major global think-tank template, which is to say an American think-tank ‘model.’ Given that the history of American think-tanks is lengthier, more robust, and consequently more analyzed in the academic literature, it was a logical approach to seek to understand these unique organizations with reference to what they are distinctly *not*. Thus, the overriding research question that informed the progression of this study can be phrased: why have supranational think-tanks adopted an evolutionary trajectory that diverged from the more ubiquitous American think-tank model? Though scholars have analyzed both American and supranational think-tanks in isolation (with considerably more research on the former), there has yet to exist a robust consideration of how these two think-tank environments respond to analytical comparison. Accordingly, this

study provided an original analysis of the American and supranational think-tank models in a comparative perspective. In doing so, two principal approaches were employed in facilitating this comparison.

9.1—American and Supranational Think-Tanks in Isolation

First, both the American and supranational think-tank models were considered in isolation. Specifically, it was queried as to what role both of these models fulfill in their respective institutional contexts. Subsequently, it was further asked what metrics, standards, and benchmarks supranational and American think-tanks have employed in gauging their efficacy and providing an impression of their ‘success.’ In analyzing both of these think-tank models, it became clear that American and supranational think-tanks seek to fulfill fundamentally different roles and, as a corollary, evaluate their success by different terms as well.

In Chapter 3, the roles and ambitions of American think-tanks were analyzed. It was demonstrated that these organizations—and, more specifically, those operating in Washington, DC—seek to fulfill a dualistic mandate: exerting a demonstrable ‘impact’ upon the policy-making process and shaping the public policy narratives. In pursuing these two goals, American think-tanks employ an array of activities and outputs that were grouped into either ‘formal’ or ‘informal’ means of influence. The ‘formal’ means American think-tanks employ include invited testimony before Congressional committees/sub-committees and the often-caricatured ‘revolving door’ phenomenon. While ‘formal’ means of influence certainly offer American think-tanks the most direct opportunity to engage with policy-makers, ‘informal’ means of influence are considerably more widely employed by think-tanks, largely due to the absence of substantial barriers-to-entry. In particular, American think-tanks focus on the dissemination of research, the

organization of fora for elite and broader public interaction, and carefully cultivated relationships with the popular media.

With an understanding of what American think-tanks *seek* to do, Chapter 4 considered how these organizations gauge their ‘success’ in fulfilling their roles. It was suggested that in harmony with the scholastic approaches to think-tank influence, American think-tanks employ both qualitative and quantitative indicators of influence, with considerable and increasing salience placed upon the latter. From a quantitative standpoint, American think-tanks rely heavily on the volume of their interaction with congressional committees/sub-committees and the frequency of their interaction with the media as their principal quantitative indicators of success. In terms of qualitative indicators of influence, American think-tanks highlight their roster of speakers, their institutional responsiveness to pressing public policy issues, and the creation of networks across the country (and world, furthermore) as a testament to their informal influence. It was clear from this chapter that American think-tanks place a premium on their quantitative benchmarks, and the factors which have led to this quantitative salience.

After delineating the roles and ambitions of American think-tanks, and how these organizations gauge their success thereof, the same questions were posed of supranational think-tanks. In Chapter 5, the concept of ‘policy networks’ was introduced as particularly relevant to the understanding of supranational think-tanks’ roles and goals. The concept of ‘policy networks’ suggests that contemporary governance is marked less by a highly-centralized, institutionalized policy-making process, and more by a highly-integrated, horizontal policy-making process. Particularly, two models of ‘policy networks’ were deemed relevant to the study of think-tanks in the European context: ‘issue networks’ and ‘policy communities.’ Whereas issue networks refer to a loose system with a large and diverse set of actors, policy communities

involve the interaction of a smaller number of actors in a more stable arrangement. It was demonstrated that, through their various activities and outputs, supranational think-tanks engage in both forms of policy networks. In pursuing their policy networking function, supranational think-tanks have a propensity toward the hosting of debates and various conferences, seminars, and workshops to create, develop, and sustain policy networks at the EU level. Through these events, think-tanks are able to attract a wide variety of policy-relevant actors, with emphasis on the presence of EU-level policy-makers and corporate actors. In supporting their ‘knowledge management’ role, supranational think-tanks focus on the production and dissemination of original research on European public policy issues, and the facilitation of educational programs centered on areas of the think-tank’s expertise and topical public policy relevance.

As in the analysis of American think-tanks, Chapter 6 began by asking how supranational think-tanks gauge their efficacy. In particular, supranational think-tanks evaluate their ‘policy network’ function through two main aspects: events and membership. Since these organizations rely so heavily on their membership for financial security (and their membership are the principal target/attending demographics at events), it is not surprising that these two aspects of policy networking are the principal benchmarks that these organizations are keen to inflate and market to the public, policy-relevant actors/organizations, and prospective organizational/corporate members. Specifically, supranational think-tanks focus on both quantitative and qualitative aspects of their membership and events. After identifying the major benchmarks and standards against which ‘policy networking’ functions are evaluated, it was then considered how the indicators of ‘knowledge management’ are framed within supranational think-tanks’ appraisals of their ‘success.’ It was importantly shown that the main instruments of ‘knowledge management’—scholarly publications and educational programming—are used

primarily as revenue-raising vehicles. However, supranational think-tanks are able to frame these two activities as enhancing their scholarly profile, thus allowing these organizations to derive monetary benefit while simultaneously enhancing their academic credibility among the public policy community.

With an understanding of the major roles, ambitions, and strategies of American and supranational think-tanks, this study then proceeded to provide the principal original contribution to the literature. Namely, three questions were poised: how are supranational and American think-tanks different?, why are they different?, and what are the implications of these differences?

9.2—American and Supranational Think-Tanks in Comparison

Chapter 7 considered how supranational and American think-tanks differ in comparative terms, and built upon the foundation of the preceding chapters. Specifically, differences between these two think-tank models were approached from three angles: roles, priorities, and principal constituencies. In terms of their roles, it was articulated that American think-tanks pursue a largely advocacy-oriented role, whereby emphasis is placed on the dissemination and popularization of a particular ideological viewpoint, with an aim to impact the policy-making process and public policy narratives. For supranational think-tanks, however, a network-oriented role was a more fitting characterization, entailing the creation and cultivation of policy networks among private and public actors in the EU-level public policy community. Namely, American think-tanks pursued those activities and outputs that were most likely to provide a quantitative means of gauging their efficacy. As such, media visibility and testimony before congressional committees and sub-committees were particularly salient modes of evaluation of think-tank ‘success.’ For supranational think-tanks, though, the principal priority was on the creation and

maintenance of policy networks, with there being little indication of a desire or actualization of quantitative gauges of ‘success.’ Instead, providing fora for this networking to take place and providing evidence of a robust and diverse membership base were central to supranational think-tanks’ priorities. Finally, the main constituencies of these two think-tank models were considered, with analysis of their respective ‘output’ and ‘donor’ constituencies. Whereas American think-tanks emphasize the media as their main ‘output constituency,’ supranational think-tanks focus largely on organizations, and more specifically corporations. For their ‘donor constituencies,’ it was revealed that supranational think-tanks similarly focus their fundraising efforts on corporations, while American think-tanks tend to focus on the individual, grass-roots level for their fundraising appeals.

In Chapter 8, two fundamental questions of this study were asked, which represent the main original thrust of this study. First, why have American and supranational think-tanks proceeded along different developmental trajectories? This study posited two principal explanatory factors behind these differences. First, it was suggested that institutional factors have had an important impact on the roles, priorities, and strategies of American and supranational think-tanks. Specifically, because supranational think-tanks have been afforded institutionalized credibility by the major institutions of the EU, they are consequently free to pursue those activities and outputs that optimize their contributions and comparative advantage in the European public policy community. American think-tanks, on the other hand, have been required to provide evidence of credibility to policy-makers, the media, and, most importantly, their donors. Accordingly, American think-tanks have to pursue certain activities and outputs that reinforce and validate their impression of credibility to these key constituencies. Thus, certain

institutional factors have informed the ambit of activities/outputs and demands placed upon both American and supranational think-tanks.

The second explanatory factor this study considered was the impact of political culture. It was suggested that American political culture, with specific consideration of how it relates to American think-tanks, aligns with an individualist, adversarial orientation. European political culture, however, was determined to be more collectivist and consensus-driven in nature. In the American think-tank community, the concomitant political culture has encouraged these organizations to pursue self-maximizing activities and outputs, and the quantification of outputs and metrics for the purposes of luring donors to their particular organization. In the supranational think-tank community, however, there has not been a political cultural emphasis on quantification and hyper-competitiveness. Instead, European political culture has encouraged activities and outputs that add value to the European public policy community, while simultaneously optimizing the comparative advantage of these organizations. In short, then, it was determined that institutional and political culture elements have had an important impact on the roles, priorities, and stratagem of both American and supranational think-tanks.

In addition to the explanatory framework this study advanced, Chapter 8 also gave consideration to the implications of these factors on the ontological nature of the American and supranational think-tank environments. In particular, three principal implications were gleaned. First, it was suggested that the impact of institutional and political culture on American and supranational think-tanks' roles, priorities, and stratagem has led to an asymmetrical degree of competitiveness in these two think-tank models. Whereas American think-tanks exist within an environment marked by zero-sum gains, supranational think-tanks face little competition in their disposition and functioning. Second, it was demonstrated that these think-tank models also face

different incentives for making original policy research contributions. While American think-tanks have an incentive to engage in a robust program of research and dissemination (largely as a credibility-enhancing medium), supranational think-tanks do not face such an incentive, and therefore use ‘knowledge management’ activities/outputs largely for the purposes of revenue-raising.

Finally, it was demonstrated that the institutional and political culture variables in the American and supranational think-tank environments have impacted the nature and extent of collaboration with other think-tanks, vertically and horizontally. Specifically, it was shown that American think-tanks shirk collaboration with most other civil actors altogether, as the bifurcation of credit for ‘successes’ does not lend well to the desire of these organizations to distinguish and market their individualized successes. However, American think-tanks have not avoided engaging with social movements altogether, as many of these organizations can be understood as emerging from, fueling, and responding to these movements. For example, “a good number of right-leaning think tanks were founded in the 1970s and 80s in large part to give conservative and libertarian intellectuals, who had struggled to find a place in academia and the mainstream media, a secure institutional perch from which to preach the gospel of ‘fusionist’ conservatism to both the public and the complacent Republic Party establishment” (*The Economist*, “Heritage DeMinted,” 2012. While supranational think-tanks rarely collaborate horizontally (with other supranational think-tanks, that is), they do actively pursue vertical collaboration, namely with think-tanks throughout the EU’s member states. By collaborating vertically, supranational think-tanks and member state think-tanks are both able to extend their reach across multi-level platforms, with there also being a widened audience for supranational think-tanks to market their policy networking capacity and their ‘knowledge management’

outputs/activities. Thus, it was revealed that the institutional and political culture aspects of the American and supranational think-tank communities have yielded markedly different internal and environmental implications for these two models.

In short, why have supranational and American think-tanks pursued such divergent developmental trajectories? This study posited that institutionalized credibility and political culture are salient and well-substantiated explanatory variables in understanding the developmental schism between these two think-tank models.

9.3—Where does this study fit?

What major contributions has this study made to the literature on think-tanks? Where does this study fit within this broader area of inquiry?

Think-tank scholars have, generally speaking, focused overwhelmingly on single case-studies of think-tanks' roles and functions. Notwithstanding the major cross-national comparative analyses of think-tanks (Abelson and Lindquist 2000, Parmar 2004, McGann 2005, Abelson 2009), the 'field of vision' of most think-tank scholars rests at the national level. Even more specifically, most of these analyses have focused on the US, and for good reason. With a high standard of transparency and clear interest for these organizations to release expansive data and robust updates on organizational health, the opportunity for scholars to engage with American think-tanks in a methodologically rigorous way is considerably more hospitable than any other national think-tank environment.

Though American think-tanks have historically represented the clear 'gold standard' in the global think-tank community, utilizing the American think-tank experience as a comparative reference point can facilitate a rich exposition of other think-tank models, while also revealing

some aspects of the American think-tank community that might not be readily deducible by a singularly American ‘field of vision.’

Accordingly, this study has not only contributed to the nascent literature on supranational think-tanks, but has also allowed for a unique angle of approaching American think-tanks. By analyzing these two markedly different think-tank models, this study has been able to identify the most pronounced differences that exist, while also identifying and contemplating some of the more nuanced, subtle disparities as well. Thus, this study has not only advanced the early scholarly discussion on think-tanks in a supranational think-tank context, but the American think-tank literature can also benefit through viewing these organizations from such a disparate reference object (i.e. supranational think-tanks). Accordingly, scholars studying think-tanks in the future might want to consider including a more robust comparative element to their analysis, as the revelations this study has made regarding American and supranational think-tanks might not have been deducible or as clear if this study proceeded as a single case-study analysis.

Despite an American-centric focus of much of the literature on think-tanks, this study can be positioned within a subset of the research on think-tanks that identifies a fluidity of these organizations across borders, while also recognizing important differences that exist (either nuanced or fundamental). Understandably, neither American nor supranational think-tanks scholarship has been defined by a wide introduction of a comparative element. In the American context, the growing number and diversity of these organizations have presented a seismic challenge for scholars to categorize, typologize, and sufficiently analyze these organizations as a whole. As such, introducing a comparative element is simply not feasible for many scholars, given the great difficulty in sufficiently analyzing American think-tanks in isolation. For supranational think-tanks, the opposite problem exists: with no more than a handful of scholars

researching these organizations (and some abandoning these organizations as their central research focus), it might seem that the literature on supranational think-tanks cannot sustain itself as a potential area of inquiry, let alone welcoming major cross-contextual comparisons. Accordingly, it might seem that the very early literature on supranational think-tanks still has significant distance to travel on its own before being able to welcome comparisons to other contexts.

Yet, from the perspective of this study, there is no better time to introduce a comparative dimension to the supranational think-tank literature, and no better ‘lighthouse’ than the American think-tank community. As identified earlier in this study, there is a sufficient baseline literature on supranational think-tanks, and comparing these organizations to their American counterparts can, and has, helped to fill in some of the more glaring absences and omissions. In short, this study can be positioned within two sub-areas of think-tank research: analysis of supranational think-tanks in isolation, and a contribution to comparative think-tank research. Though there are multiple opportunities for future research in these sub-areas (which will be identified shortly), there are some missing, under-served, or unclear elements of this study that should be raised.

9.4—What’s missing?

Despite this study’s attempt to provide a robust, holistic account of the development of American and supranational think-tank community in isolation and in comparison, there naturally exists some missing or underserved elements that, time and space permitting, could possibly have enhanced this study. In particular, there are three main elements that this study admits as susceptible to critique: think-tank ‘tunnel vision,’ consideration of policy-maker leadership style, and the absence of a robust case study element.

Perhaps the most notable weakness of this study rests in the parochial focus on the most visible, most documented, and most hegemonic think-tanks in both the American and supranational think-tank communities. Though this study sought to encapsulate the entirety of the think-tank communities under interrogation (as defined in the opening chapter), it is nevertheless a reality that there are asymmetries in the American and supranational think-tank communities themselves. Principally, it is the case that there are a select number of think-tanks in both realms that are able to command a disproportional degree of visibility, resources, and attention from scholars and analysts alike. Particularly in the American context, there are a handful of think-tanks that grossly overwhelm the visibility and resources of their approximately 400 counterparts (in ‘the beltway’). This is both a challenge and a benefit for scholars studying these organizations.

The obvious challenge is that, with 400 think-tanks in DC alone, studying all of these organizations in a methodologically rigorous and egalitarian way is unpractical, if not just for the difficulty in finding relevant information and data from most of these organizations. Naturally, then, scholars have focused on those organizations that provide the most robust and detailed information on their operations, which is largely found from the most visible and resource-rich think-tanks. Especially given the fluidity of think-tank creation and dissolution and the basic difficulty in actually identifying all relevant organizations, it is not surprising that the most enduring, stable, and visible organizations have been the main subjects of scholarly inquiry. The same reality is true of the supranational think-tank community, though on a much smaller scale. With supranational think-tanks forming and dissolving with little indication (or even any discernible indication at all), research on these organizations has focused on the most prominent and ‘stable’ organizations. Furthermore, and perhaps as a testament to the infancy of the

supranational think-tank community, many of these organizations do not have an active or otherwise updated webpage with which to view their activities and outputs. Thus, those supranational think-tanks with evidence of stability and permanency have been the subject of much of the attention of scholars writing in this area.

Of course, by focusing similarly on the most dominant organizations in both the American and supranational context, this study has not contributed to an amelioration of this ‘tunnel vision’ that has been endemic in analyses of think-tanks. Yet, the intention of this study was not to do so, and focusing on the most visible and stable organizations in both geo-institutional contexts provides the most genuine basis for comparison. For instance, focusing on some of the smaller, less visible, and less documented think-tanks in the American community while simultaneously focusing on the most dominant think-tanks in the EU, and vice versa, would not represent a fair comparison of these think-tank communities. However, the critique can still be raised that this ‘tunnel vision’ has not captured the full universe of think-tanks in both geo-institutional areas of analysis.

A second critique that could be raised with this study is the absence of a consideration of how institutional and political leadership can impact the roles, priorities, and stratagem of think-tanks in both contexts. While some scholars have considered how the leadership style of public policy leaders can impact the capacity of think-tanks to engage with high-level policy-makers, there is still much attention needed to this particular relationship. Furthermore, the relationship between leadership styles and think-tanks in the EU has not been contemplated thus far in the literature. While this study has suggested that institutionalized credibility and political culture are the salient explanatory vehicles behind American and supranational think-tanks’ disparate trajectories, it is quite possible that the style of executive leadership can have an impact on the

capacity of think-tanks to command the attention of high-level policy-makers, in both cases. However, as important as executive leadership might be on think-tanks, the institutional and political architecture of both the US and the EU are much greater than a single person (or small group of individuals). As previously mentioned, a ‘closed door’ from one individual (or even one branch of government) does not preclude think-tanks from seeking to influence other policy-makers in other branches of governance. Though by no means belittling the importance of executive leadership, it is not the case that a president of the US or European Commission that is inhospitable to think-tanks can nullify the potential ‘influence’ of these organizations. Nevertheless, future research on supranational think-tanks, and extensions of the comparative approach of this study, should at least include a consideration of executive leadership’s impact on think-tanks.

A third and final critique that can reasonably be levelled against this study comes from the absence of a deep case study dimension to the analysis. While some scholars have made significant contributions to the think-tank literature through the employment of a deep case-study approach to their work, this is still an area in which the supranational think-tank literature has noticeably lagged. By providing case studies to demonstrate how supranational and American think-tanks translate their roles, priorities, and stratagem into empirical situations, it is extremely valuable to provide an indication of the extent to which the formal study of think-tanks is aligned with their ‘real world’ activities and outcomes. Though this study did not provide an earnest case-study dimension to the analysis, there is good reason for this. Namely, given that this study sought to provide a holistic, robust account of the factors impacting supranational and American think-tanks’ development, alongside analysis of their roles, priorities, constituencies, etc., there was simply insufficient time and space to introduce a methodologically rigorous and robust case

study element. Accordingly, this study recognizes that the inclusion of case-studies would have enhanced this study's empirical applicability; however, given the expansive scope of analysis of this study, including a case-study element was infeasible.

9.5—Areas for Further Research

Besides the principal original contribution this dissertation has made to the study of think-tanks, there were naturally a series of more ontological, ethereal questions that emerged from the analysis, both during and in hindsight. While not central to the contributions of this study, there are some interesting questions that were not directly answered, but nonetheless deserve to be recognized. In particular, there are three salient questions that, while ideally pursued in further research, ought to at least be raised for future discussion and contemplation.

First, while it was demonstrated that supranational think-tanks have shirked the traditional American think-tank model in their evolution, it is still unclear whether a supranational think-tank 'model' can be easily transplanted in other geo-institutional contexts. As was previously indicated, Europeanist scholars have popularized the notion of the EU's institutional arrangement as *sui generis*, and therefore unfriendly to external comparison. In addition to the reality that supranational think-tanks exist within this particular public policy and policy-making environment, it was also demonstrated that the various aspects of the EU's institutional setup have informed the activities and outputs that these organizations pursue. Accordingly, given the suggestion that the EU represents an irreproducible institutional layout at the state level, is it necessarily the case that supranational think-tanks, too, represent a *sui generis* think-tank model?

Intuitively, this study would suggest that the transplantation of the supranational think-tank model to the state-level might yield tepid efficacy. With the unique multi-level governance structure of the EU, comparisons to the traditional state-based unit of analysis are difficult, let alone the equally (if not more) unique involvement of non-state actors within this system. However, where the supranational think-tank model might offer credence is in the emerging and established regional integration initiatives around the world. While scholars have attempted to draw genuine comparisons between the EU and other regional integration projects (see, for example: Grugel 2004; Momani 2007; Murray 2010; Reinermann 2010), albeit relatively unsuccessfully (De Lombaerde et al 2010, 732), little has been advanced on how the non-institutional aspects of the European integration project might fare in other regional integration contexts. Thus, in addition to a much-needed broader interrogation of the inculcation of civil society and non-state actors in these external regional integration projects, there is a clear opportunity to test whether or not the supranational think-tank model has been (or, perhaps most appropriately, could be) realized in these other integrative contexts.

The second principal question this study identifies (and, if space were permitting, would have eagerly contemplated) surrounds whether supranational think-tanks do not actually represent a unique think-tank model, but are rather in a nascent phase along an evolutionary trajectory that culminates in alignment with the American think-tank model. This particular question points to a broader discussion about whether think-tanks could be seen as evolving along a teleological, 'Fukuyama-esque' trajectory, whereby the hegemonic American think-tank model represents the 'end point' for these organizations across geo-institutional contexts. This question, of course, suggests that, globally, think-tanks might be deterministically predisposed to ultimately and eventually pursuing activities and outputs that mirror those of American think-

tanks. Given the unparalleled empirical ‘success’ of American think-tanks, actors considering the genesis of a think-tank typically look to the American think-tanks as both inspiration and a ‘road-map’ for their own organizations. Thus, is it possible that supranational think-tanks are just at the early stages of their ultimate development toward adopting a more distinctly American think-tank model?

In many ways, a response to this question might be largely informed by one’s response to the previous question. If supranational think-tanks are understood to represent a distinctly ‘un-American’ think-tank model, and operate within a *sui generis* institutional climate, the teleology of think-tank development might be rejected. If, however, the institutional setup of the EU is not immediately ineligible for comparisons to state-based models of governance, and supranational think-tanks are not understood to represent a fundamentally incomparable think-tank model (vis-à-vis American think-tanks), then the case could possibly be made that supranational think-tanks are in the early stages of a process leading to their Americanization. The case for a deterministic think-tank teleology, of course, requires considerable substantiation—yet, around the world, the American think-tank model has empirically been the most desirous of replication.

A third, and final, question that would be particularly important for further research lends itself to more practical considerations. Specifically, it should be considered whether American and supranational think-tanks could each benefit from an inclusion of some of the distinguishing aspects of their counterpart models. The reality that both of these models prioritize different aspects of their activities and outputs does not necessarily indicate that an integration of the particularly efficacious aspects of other models would be superfluous. For example, Fabian Zuleeg, Director of the EPC, notes “we do consider US examples in the development of our strategy but the US environment is very different: endowments, revolving doors with politics

changing between TTs [sic] and administration, the scale of think tanks etc.” (Fabian Zuleeg, personal communication, April 14, 2016). This is further corroborated by a controversial post in *The Economist*, in which it was suggested:

American think-tanks also enjoy a big advantage over those in Europe, linked to the system of political appointments for so many posts in the American government. They basically act as parking places for all manner of senior figures who are waiting to get back into government, or as incubators for bright newcomers who are waiting to enter an administration for the first time (*The Economist*, “The dodgy side,” 2009).

Supranational think-tanks might benefit by deliberately seeking to improve their media profile. As was discussed, American think-tanks place enormous emphasis on their interaction with the media, and the popular media represents one of the most desired and disseminated constituencies of these organizations. Yet, it was also demonstrated that supranational think-tanks are not remotely as interested as inculcating a strong media presence. However, if supranational think-tanks focus efforts on interacting with the European media—especially the limited number of EU-specific outlets—it becomes possible for their visibility to increase. In turn, with improved visibility comes increased awareness of the think-tanks’ activities, and might attract corporate and organizational actors to consider membership in a supranational think-tank. Given the extent to which supranational think-tanks rely on their corporate and organizational members, such an increased visibility could only bolster their awareness among this key funding demographic.

Similarly, American think-tanks might benefit from increased efforts to highlight their networking capacity to corporate and organizational donors. As American think-tanks, and especially the most visible ones, are able to attract a powerful roster of policy-makers as speakers and event participants, it is somewhat surprising that they do not place significantly more marketing emphasis on the opportunity for corporate/organizational actors to interact with high-level policy-makers in a neutral environment. By highlighting how corporate/organizational

donors can interact with policy-makers, American think-tanks would open themselves to further funding from those donors looking to interact with policy-makers outside the traditional lobbying channels. Thus, further research could add to this comparative literature by introducing a normative element in the comparison.

It should be noted here, however, that this study should not be seen as possessing a normative dimension to the preceding analysis. In other words, in discussing American and supranational think-tanks in isolation and in comparison, this study is not suggesting that one model is ‘better’ than another, however so defined. American and supranational think-tanks continue to survive, suggesting that both of these think-tank models provide a utility to those they are seeking to impact and, importantly, those who are willing to pay for these efforts. Thus, while think-tanks can and do engage in comparison amongst their peers in both the American and supranational contexts, discussing whether the American or supranational think-tank model is ‘better’ is futile and insensitive to the vast differences of these organizations, as discussed throughout this study. Accordingly, any interpretation of normativity throughout this study is not intended nor is it condoned.

9.6—Final Thoughts

Though this study sought to contribute to the scholarly literature on think-tanks in both the American and supranational context, the main original contribution emanating from this study comes in the form of the comparative approach that was adopted. In contemplating why supranational and American think-tanks have pursued markedly different developmental trajectories, a dualistic explanatory framework was posited. First, the institutionalized credibility that has been afforded to supranational think-tanks has allowed these organizations to pursue their most comparatively advantageous activities and outputs, while the absence of such

institutionalized credibility for American think-tanks has required these organizations to demonstrate and validate their credibility to the policy-making community and, importantly, their donor constituencies. Second, the disparate political cultures of the US and EU have regulated the ambit of appropriateness for think-tanks in these geo-institutional climates. For American think-tanks, an adversarial, individualistic political culture has pushed these organizations to present a hyper-competitive, quantitative-driven disposition, while the consensus-driven, collectivist European political culture has encouraged supranational think-tanks to focus on policy networking as their main contribution to the EU-level public policy community. In short, this study has posited that institutionalized credibility and political culture have saliently informed the disparate trajectories American and supranational think-tanks have pursued.

This study began with former Commission President Jacques Delors' observation that "paradoxically, the development of think tanks in Europe has hardly been 'thought' about" (Boucher, 2004). Heeding Delors' accurate depiction of the lacunae in scholarly research on think-tanks in Europe, this study sought to contribute to the nascent literature on think-thinks in the EU, while simultaneously offering an approach that has yet to be embraced in the literature, namely that of a comparative angle. Accordingly, supranational think-tanks were compared against their considerably more well-studied and well-established American peers, providing insights into the major differences that these two think-tank models have demonstrated. Despite the increasing temporal distance from Delors' comment, there is still much work to be done. Perhaps, then, this study can be viewed as a starting point for future scholarship on the nature of American and supranational think-tanks in a comparative light.

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