

Locating Access to the Immigration Debate:
Analyzing the Complex Practices and Propensities of
Intellectual Production within the Field of
Immigration Think Tanks

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On my honor
I have neither given nor received
Unauthorized aid on this thesis

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Abstract:

My thesis examines the role that think tanks play in the immigration policy debates. Drawing from Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of social space and fields of power, I critically analyze the space that immigration think tanks occupy and the influence they demonstrate with regard to their relational positioning in this space. According to Thomas Medvetz (2008:9-10), think tanks can be understood as an "organizational device for gathering and assembling forms of authority conferred by the more established institutions of academics, politics, business and the media" (Medvetz 2008: 9-10). By analyzing the intellectual products written by experts from five distinct think tanks, I seek to uncover the strategies, practices and propensities of each organization. This analysis allows for situating each organization in relation to each other. I also include in the analysis each think tanks unique orientation to the proximate locations of power. For my thesis, I examine a think tank sample that includes the Urban Institute (government contract model orientation); Migration Policy Institute (academic orientation); National Immigration Forum (economic orientation); Federation for American Immigration Reform (ideological orientation); and National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (grassroots orientation).

By coding the policy-oriented publications of each think tank, I create a conceptual field through which I can visualize each organizations unique location in relation to each other. This field emerged out of positioning each organization on two primary axes: (1) the epistemological axis, which measures whether the legitimacy and/or authority of the intellectual products rest upon academic/scholarly/objective evidence or more upon a popular/narrative evidence and (2) the political rationale/axis, which measures whether the intellectual products on US immigration policy reflect a focus on its national impact or on a more comprehensive goal of internationally recognized human rights. I explore a third axis, which measures the interests that are being promoted (if any) in terms of business interests vs. worker interests. I conclude with a discussion as to which think tank is the most effective among the five and I explain why I think their particular characteristics put them in their particular position such that they have the greatest potential to influence immigration policy.

Locating Access to the Immigration Debate: *Analyzing the Complex Practices and Propensities of Intellectual Production within the Field of Immigration Think Tanks*

Emmy Barcelo

The decision to study think tanks stems from a desire to find answers to the frustrations many have experienced with what appears to be the demise of civil political debate. What these concerns have led me on is a quest to discover the sources that encourage the production of what I perceive as irrational knowledge/truth or reality that has come to dominate and stunt political debates. An example of this is the forceful advocacy that uses rhetoric of the criminalization of immigrants – something that has been used to deny entire ethnic populations access to their basic human rights. It is self-evident to me debates like these are inherently flawed and inefficient. What I find most disturbing is that the policy decisions have and will continue to lead towards lethal consequences, both in monetary and human terms.

So why do I examine think tanks? There are many ways to answer this question. To study think tanks is to observe trends in the contraction of a comprehensive debate and the loss of any hope for long-term solutions. It is also to see how the development of think tanks coincided with the assault on the credibility of academic thought and the rise of the politicization of facts. During my analysis it has become clear that the think tank is no longer epitomized by the ideals of objective and neutral inquiry. Rather it appears that in today's climate think tanks gain their credibility through new, evolving sources of power and legitimacy.

By focusing on organizations that focus on the issue of immigration, I analyze the work of a particular breed of think tanks. A starting point for studying think tanks is to locate the social space that they occupy in the field of power. By utilizing Thomas Medvetz and Pierre Bourdieu as guides, it brings to light the dynamic space that think tanks occupy. It requires looking within the think tanks: examining the organizational structure, seeing who qualifies as a sources of expertise, where their credibility originates, what is their "intellectual product", who is their constituency? This study also requires looking towards other think tanks. A relational analysis is paramount in that it allows one to determine how think tanks function in their social space. What are the rules that govern their behavior? Do they occupy their own field of power or do they gain legitimacy by association with academia, the media, the political or economic

field or any combination of these four bases? What are the differences that indicate that think tanks, while unique, merely stand for a particular position in social space? More specifically, what are the social conditions that shape the think tank's production and how does this expand one's understanding of these organizations as discreet entities or organizations that are relevant? In my study of five think tanks within the field that specialize in informing immigration policy debates, I chose to study a small sample of organizations that appeared to differ from one another. The goal of my analysis is to make sense of different (or similar) characteristics that make up the complex and dynamic field of knowledge production – specifically focusing on issues related to immigration.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a limited amount of literature from a sociological standpoint that exists today on the topic of think tanks. Much of the current literature on think tanks focuses on the historical conditions that has led to the rise of the think tank as a major player in the policy process, the structural transformations that characterize this rise in power, and the impact they have had in framing the debates (Langerak 2010; Medvetz 2012; Rich 2004;). Some authors have focused on developing typologies in which to define and understand the strikingly different forms of organizations that exist under the title “think tank” (Weaver 1989). Others explore the effects of think tanks on policy, which often acknowledges the conservative think tanks influential advantage (Miller-Cribbs, Cagel, Natale and Cummings 2010; Rich 2001b; Rich 2005). While these studies are valuable in their own regard, it is evident that think tanks are constantly changing over time. Because think tanks have increasingly diversified from their origins, typologies and conclusive studies tend to be relevant only for a small window of time. In other words, the growing diversity of these institutions inherently resists the possibility of any static definition or conclusive study (Medvetz 2008, Stone 2007).

Despite the limitations of past studies, much can be learned from the previous studies of the think tank. As Andrew Rich proclaims “an appreciation of think tanks is helpful not just for understanding the political role of expertise and ideas in American policy making but for accounting for how ideology informs policy making” (Rich 2004; 10). This understanding explains a good deal of the scholarly literature that has focused on the emergence and history of think tanks – with a particular emphasis on the evolution of these institutions from their historical origins into the peculiar forms that exist today.

Historical/Descriptive Narrative of the Think Tank

The model for the think tank emerged around World War I. It was during this time that policy research institutes came to be seen as a vehicle where academics could produce meaningful research that would help to inform policymakers (Langerak 2010; Medvetz 2012; Rich 2004) – a need that stemmed from the social unrest that accompanied this period. The value that these organizations held came from their independence and autonomy from the heated issues that they were researching (and intending to influence). Their mode of legitimacy arose from the classical authority given to reason and the intellectual, one that had the value of operating outside of the political system, something that allowed for a unique level of objectivity and neutrality.

The think tank became a definable breed of organizations during the middle of the century, a development that occurred in the post-WWII context. Think tanks of this era emerged in the form of government-contracted research centers. This relationship with the government benefited think tanks because it came with a built-in audience. Think tanks gained legitimacy because of this association with government. This was something that earlier institutes had to work to achieve – by visibility and credibility- or by association with academia.

During the 1960's, a new development in think tanks emerged along side the government-contract model. The historical conditions encouraged new organizational forms that had close ties to advocacy groups, political parties and corporate powerhouses (Medvetz 2012; 3). The business and corporate world began to organize in ways that created a strong united power base to represent their interests. Once this coalition realized the importance of political mobilization, and with large donors waiting to give their support, they began to exercise immense amounts of social and political influence (Medvetz 2007; Barley 2010; Rich 2004). Business leaders aimed their clout at combating those forces that could potentially stand in their way such as government, environmentalist and public interest groups (Barley 2010; 783). This development occurred simultaneously with a growing philanthropic sector that made money available for the creation of non-profit organizations, i.e., think tanks, which gave these wealthy donors access to the public policy arena in ways unavailable to them in the past (Medvetz 2007). Lastly, this time period saw the revitalization of the American conservative movement – which deliberately used the think tank organization as a way to compete with other dominant intellectual currents and to stop the rising relevancy

of neoliberal economic theory in the university and policy arena (Mitchell 2009; Rich 2004; Medvetz 2012). These think tanks, like the government-contract organizations, had a built-in audience – they developed ideology-based research products that partisan political actors could use as weapons in the ideological debates (Rich 2005). During this period the conditions of “knowledge production” shifted from its academic parentage, towards a less neutral and more ideologically driven and biased agenda – one that was aimed at specific audiences.

Something that enhanced the erosion of the academic model was the spread of news and information sources. With the expansion of the news media, beginning in the 1970’s with 24-hour cable news, organizations could now move beyond producing research products for policymakers and begin to affect policy from the bottom up. This was a pivotal moment in the history of think tanks, as the media became more powerful, it began to exert pressure on these organizations to change the standard of the research/intellectual product. In its initial form, think tanks produced academic books and articles for journals. Now think tanks had to tailor their products for the larger consumption demanded by mass media (Rich; Medvetz (2012); MC; Barley 2010).

According to Timothy Mitchell (2005) this changing standard of research did not occur simply due to the expansion of the news media but rather intellectual producers responded to these conditions and developed political technologies and socio-technical arrangements that help give legitimacy to new modes of thought. By using the example of the spread of neoliberalism, Mitchell argues that what started as a doctrine gained legitimacy only after think tanks presented as evidence ‘research’ that supported the claims of their doctrine. More importantly though, think tanks were able take advantage of what Mitchell refers too as ‘second-hand dealers of ideas.’ Think tanks could translate complex theories and ideas into “policy documents, teaching materials, news stories and legislative agendas.” (Mitchell 2005, 387) It was in this environment that people came to recognize the unique opportunity think tanks provided for those interested in manipulating ‘the general climate of opinion.’

This new production standard required briefer and less nuanced research products that catered to the non-scholar. Instead of books or scholarly journal articles, think tanks now produced research products that were easily grasped by a ready audience (Medvetz 2012; 4; Barley 2010). This research product did not rely exclusively on association with the academic standard, but acquired legitimacy if it resonated with its

audience. The mass media in effect enlarged the audience that could ‘consume’ the research products of the think tanks. This also created demand for sources of political expertise – people who could condense the complexities of policy debates into ‘sound bites’ (Medvetz 2007:16; Stone 2007). Think tanks now had to employ people who could effectively communicate the often dense and complex academic concepts into information that could be accessed by the non-scholar (Stone 2007). The stakes of competition were altered and public visibility became one of the most important and defining qualities of a successful think tank.

This evolution of the think tank has essentially changed the qualifications that one needs to participate as an expert/intellectual. The traditional notion of intellectual/academic expertise expanded to the more experiential fields of political and economic power. Now think tanks employ specialists from the academic, political, business and media realms (see Medvetz (2010a: 550) for discussion of these specialist). With this new understanding of the different ways to bring legitimacy and authority to a think tank, experts, who now entered the field, were less likely than their predecessors to acquire legitimacy through the traditional means of academic authority and unbiased objective analysis (Barley 2010; 792). In fact, non-academics could find a role as an expert. The floodgates opened and the debate over who is legitimate as an expert began (Rich 2001).

Ideology

The new world of think tanks took on an overtly ideological character. Rich (2001:56) articulates the certain characteristics of this evolution:

As the number of think tanks in the United States has more than quadrupled, ideological think tanks have emerged in substantially greater numbers than think tanks of no identifiable ideology... Not only do conservative organizations outnumber liberal organizations... but they also consistently outpace liberal organizations in the size of their budgets and in the breadth of their research agendas.

The new ideological underpinning of these organizations has all but eroded the long held supremacy of academic objectivity. Academic objectivity still exists as a stamp of approval for the research product. But think tanks today can attain legitimacy by successfully promoting their ideology particularly if they can maintain some level of academic rigor.

The ideological divide that has ensued is often thought of as being uneven – conservatives seem to be much more effective in swaying policy debates than their liberal counterparts. Rich (2004) describes the two distinct models of research: the liberal think tank focuses on “pain-staking research” and “objective writing” while the conservative think tank focuses on the “far-reaching” impact in the “war of ideas” (Rich

2004:1-2). The strategies differ – while the liberals tend to emphasize their role as “producers of credible expertise”, the conservatives emphasize their supremacy in the hostile debate over ideas. There is considerable literature that discusses the possible factors that play into the conservative success. This literature studies the use of language and the strategies of influence that are utilized to impact policy.

George Lakoff (2006) draws on cognitive science and linguistics to explain the conservative advantage in terms of a moral foundation of identifiable fundamental values upon which their political platform rests. Progressive values lack an articulated broad based moral structure that can support in a cohesive way the progressive’s political stances, thus progressives produce a fragmented vision. Miller-Cribbs et al. (2010) pins this down to a matter of methodological, calculated and well-funded efforts. These authors note the structural advantage of conservative think tanks with their access to wealthy donors. They state that conservative think tanks are part of a larger network of foundations, universities and media outlets that seek to support and preserve conservative ideological and political ideals. This conservative network has a vested interest in promoting its ideology and thus has more foundations and donors willing to fund think tank research. Rich (2001) argues that the uneven ideological playing field is due to factors such as access to more resources and the inclusion of a broader range of issues that they cover. Liberal think tanks tend to be issue-specific. This is consistent with Lakoff’s observation that progressives diminish their impact when they focus on specific issues while conservatives incorporate a value consistent approach to a large range of issues.¹

The evolution of think tanks is one that reflects the growing power of the proximate institutions and the individuals who have come to occupy positions within these fields. In the beginning of this story academic credentials were the necessary condition of political relevancy. Experts were granted participation by offering research products that reflected intellectual rigor. With the rise of American business as an organized (and wealthy) group of influence and power, academic rigor started to lose its exclusive hold on legitimacy. Business interests began to shift the entire structure of the sphere of think tanks, changing the focus from objective research to ideologically driven research. Business interests and conservative ideologies now monopolize the ideological climate and have been successful at marginalizing

¹ The issue here is that conservatives are effectively “winning” the war of ideas solely because every issue can be approached the same way. That is to say that there is a range of values that they draw on – free enterprise, personal freedoms, family values, small government – that are all connected and thus resonate with the people who have the same world view. Because of this cohesion they can affectively change all areas of concern. When liberals try to attack one issue (such as immigration, education, health care) they don’t realize the power that is working against them. Conservatives are not going to compromise.

other points of view. The rise of mass media created the demand for political experts and led to a permanent shift in the standards of intellectual production – this shift is seen in the rise of the non-scholar as expert. It was during this process that academic rigor lost its dominance as the standard for a think tank’s production.

At this time, due to all the factors I have discussed, the think tanks’ credibility or even legitimacy is mired in argument. Stone (2007:262) discusses the dynamic features of contemporary think tanks. Some still produce scientific knowledge; some are overtly ideological; while some engage in aggressive marketing and cater predominately to media; others still produce more academically rigorous studies; some are specialized (environmental, regional, communal/human interest); some are discipline based (economic policy, foreign policy, social policy); some are geared towards publications and analysis (ink-tank); some are activist (think-and-do tanks). What this calls into question is how one can actually measure legitimacy; is legitimacy to be understood in terms of one’s access to power, or to one’s success in influencing the political debate, or to the proliferation of one’s ideology. The evolution of the think tank is important to know because it shows that the social space of the think tank is dynamic – constantly changing.

A New Approach to Studying Think Tanks

Thomas Medvetz, drawing on Pierre Bourdieu’s theory, seeks to uncover the dynamic field of play, where the powers that give authority to the think tank exist. Using Bourdieu’s concept of “social space” and “fields of power”² Medvetz develops a new and innovative framework to study the particular organizational form known as the think tank. Medvetz (2008:2012) argues that the organization called think tank occupies a location that seeks to bring together the best ideas and implementers of policy. This location places the think tank in a space that bridges these fields of power, where knowledge is produced and ideas are exchanged, something Medvetz calls the “interstitial field” (Babb 2009:12). The notion of the field of power in Medvetz’s framework is one that is constituted by four proximate locations of power – (1) Field of Knowledge Production (i.e. university); (2) Political Field; (3) Economic Field; and (4) the Media Field. Medvetz uses the concept of the “interstitial field” to describe the location of think tanks relative to these pre-existing fields – that is think tanks occupy a space that is located somewhere between these fields

² David Swartz (1997:292) discuss synthesizes this concept: “The concept points to arenas of conflict and struggle that develop with the emergence of particular kinds of valued resources, and shows how forms of social closure result from structures and processes that engage individuals and groups in competition for valued cultural resources as fields gain autonomy.”

and come to form an identity by negotiating a unique locations among the four fields (Medvetz 2012; 14) This evolution has led to an increasingly diverse arrangement of think tanks that now exist in this interstitial field that both seek distance from (to establish independence) and association with these sources of power (for legitimacy). (Medvetz 2008:6).

Medvetz starts by locating think tanks in their distinct position in the social structure (a position that Medvetz argues is a 'privileged position in the field of power'). Its location is the space of interpenetration by the proximate institutions of academia, politics, economics and media fields. This analysis allows one to focus on the social conditions that bring into being and that sustain these individual organizations by assessing their practices and propensities. In other words, through this analytical lens, think tanks can be understood as an "organizational device for gathering and assembling forms of authority conferred by the more established institutions of academics, politics, business and the media" (Medvetz 2008: 9-10). Ultimately, the think tank is an organization that emerged to fill a vacuum. His analysis allows for a way to observe how power is distributed in a given social space and how power is lost.

My Approach

This thesis examines the role of think tanks in the debates over immigration policy. I explore the different ways in which immigration-related think tanks engage the issue. The purpose of my analysis is to understand the different strategies used by think tanks to construct and conceptualize the problem. Is the problem one that is located within our current immigration laws and policies or is the problem a reflection of something bigger? What are the characteristics of these five organizations and in what ways are they similar and different from one another? What are the fundamental differences that separate one organization from the next? Do they occupy distinct social spaces? How does this impact their research products? By examining 5 different organizations I try to uncover the complexities that encompass the issue of immigration while trying to understand how these organizations mirror the paralysis of the immigration debate. By examining their interests, rationales and objectivity, how did they arrange their associations to increase their influence on immigration policy?

Each organization chosen has a significant focus on immigration issues and policies. All of the chosen organizations publish materials that are interchangeably labeled as products, research products, intellectual products, position papers or publications that are explicitly aimed at influencing policy debates.

I examine how each organization seeks political relevancy by means of these publications. Paying attention to the strategies, practices and propensities of each organization, I argue that relevancy and legitimacy are both gained and asserted in different ways that are unique to each organization relative to their proximity to outside organizations. I specifically look at their research products and observe the products' fact presentation, the form of argumentation and persuasion used, the recommendations or conclusions, the intended audience and how it informs or even influences public policy.

According to Medvetz (2008), think tanks produce legitimate knowledge through association with academia, politics, economics, or media. I initially focused on one particular organization so I could explore its struggle for legitimacy. Oftentimes the expert is far removed from the consequences of their recommended policy. So I wanted to explore how an immigrant's story could gain the same legitimacy as the interests of other more powerful stakeholders. Where and how does such a voice gain legitimacy? In Ananya Roy's (2010) study of microfinance, she discusses the marginalization of knowledge that has emerged from the grassroots models of microfinance that emerged in Bangladesh. Stories of success in Bangladesh are often marginalized by the authoritarian knowledge that is presented in the form of statistics by western organizations. This is the unfortunate reality of the legitimacy of different forms of knowledge where experience in the global south is seen as a "set of dispersed stories that do not add up to a comprehensive system of knowledge" (Roy, 125). Does this dynamic play a role in marginalizing the voices of immigrants because the other think tanks have a closer association to "authoritarian knowledge"?³ This question is always underneath everything I examined when working on this thesis.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology: Choosing My Sample

My research focuses on analyzing the intellectual production of five think tanks to understand how this interstitial field of think tanks engages in the immigration debate. I chose to study organizations that explicitly wanted to influence the immigration policy debates. Due to the problematic nature of measuring actual influence, I decided to take the direct advice of Professor Thomas Medvetz. His advice was to limit

³ The truth is that often times the power of grassroots knowledge is invisible until it becomes visible and derives power as soon as it is able to translate its position into something that can be understood as legitimate by the other four fields. Maybe it needs to penetrate one of the fields of power to gain legitimacy such as the political field. By including an organization whose legitimacy claim comes from being the closest to the actual effects of policy – that is a grassroots organization of immigrants, I hope to explore this issue. By using Medvetz model of the social space of think tanks (with the addition of grassroots as an emergent form of legitimacy), this paper seeks to understand the field of immigration think tanks.

my sample of think tanks to those that had distinct organizational qualities about them and thus would occupy a distinct location in their particular field.⁴ This allowed me to narrow my choices to a small number of organizations.

My preliminary research on the organizations consisted of comparing mission statements and ‘about us’ descriptions that I found on their the website and/or annual reports. I settled on a sample that consists of five organizations that are dedicated to influencing immigration policy but are markedly different from one another.⁵ Another distinction is that these five organizations seek legitimacy through institutions from different fields of power. The purpose of this decision is to examine if this relationship influenced the shape of one’s intellectual production.

The five distinct organizations are: (1) Urban Institute: it has a strong academic presence and a unique tie to the government through contracts; (2) Migration Policy Institute: it represents an organization that is academically esteemed; (3) National Immigration Forum: it has noticeable ties to the business community; (4) Federation for American Immigration Reform: it represents an organization with a distinctly ideological character with an association to the political field; and (5) National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights: it represents an organization with a direct connection to the grassroots community.

Upon deciding which organizations to study, I compiled a sample of documents from each organization to analyze. I found the documents by navigating the organizations’ websites and finding “intellectual productions” that best represented their positions and their style of analysis. I selected the most accessible research products that had a policy orientation pertaining to immigration. This task was harder than I thought because the websites and available publications varied dramatically. Some of the organizations were large and produced a massive body of publications and reports. Others were relatively small and mainly had short press releases available. I wanted to have a similar amount of documents from each organization and so I came up with unique strategies to select publications of interest. Below I will briefly discuss why I chose these organizations and how I determined the relevant articles.

(1) *Urban Institute (UI)*: UI is a think tank that is linked to a set of federal agencies. It was

⁴ Personal communication, December 10, 2011

⁵ Urban Institute is the only organization in my sample that does not exclusively focus on the study of immigration. I chose it because it places a good deal of emphasis on immigration and it also had the unique organizational feature of being tied to a government organization.

established in the mid-1960s to analyze the impact of social programs and problems facing America's cities and their residents. On its website, UI places emphasis on an active effort at data collection, policy analysis, evaluation, and public education (<http://www.urban.org/about/index.cfm>). Today, the UI has a variety of policy centers that are committed to rigorous methods of analysis that seek to understand the impact of public policies and programs. They also inform governments and communities of the most effective and efficient programs. I chose UI because they recognize the growing importance of the issue of immigration, especially as immigrants move from their traditional urban locations to new places in the U.S.. After a close examination of the website, I decided to analyze articles designated as research or policy reports in the "*Economic and Social Impacts*" and "*Immigration Policy*" categories. The articles were published in the year 2006 or later.

(2) Migration Policy Institute (MPI): MPI was founded in 2001 as an offshoot of the International Migration Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. MPI emphasizes their pursuit of pragmatic and thoughtful responses to issues that emerge from immigration debate. MPI is a think tank that is guided by the philosophy that "international migration needs active and intelligent management. When such policies are in place and are responsibly administered they bring benefits to immigrants, their families, communities of origin and destinations, and sending and receiving countries" (<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/about/index.php>). Due to a massive body of publications from MPI, I limited my sample to reports listed in the sections "*The Unauthorized Population*" and "*US Immigration Reform: Setting the Agenda*" that were published in the year 2005 or later.

(3) National Immigration Forum (NIF): The National Immigration Forum was founded in 1982. NIF emphasizes policy analysis and reform possibilities that would benefit various constituents who have a stake in comprehensive immigration reform. NIF sees immigrants as an important constituency in this country. They promote "responsible policies that honor our founding fathers ideals of America as a land of opportunities while addressing today's economic and national security needs" (<http://www.immigrationforum.org/about>). But NIF primarily favors immigration reform that benefits business and the economics of the nation.

After some difficulty navigating their website, I found issue briefs located under the

subheadings within their Priorities section. I chose all of the publications I could find listed as the issue briefs in “*Comprehensive Immigration Reform In The 112th Congress*”, “*Legislative proposals related to America’s Workforce*”, “*Creating a More Welcoming Path to Citizenship for New American’s*”, “*Investing in Immigrant Integration*”, “*Securing the Border*” and “*Focusing Enforcement Resources In A Broken Immigration System*”. In addition, I selected articles that were listed under the section “*States - Advancing the Principle that Immigration is a Federal Responsibility*”.

(4) Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR): Founded in 1979, FAIR “seeks to improve border security, to stop illegal immigration, and to promote immigration levels consistent with the national interest—more traditional rates of about 300,000 a year.” (<http://www.fairus.org/site/PageNavigator/about.html>). FAIR has a large amount of published reports. I examine issue briefs listed in the 2010 Annual Report and found articles listed under the “*Illegal Immigration*” and “*Labor Economics*” section of “*Immigration Issues*”. The documents chosen include reports that have a substantial analysis sections.

(5) National Network of Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR): NNIRR was founded in 1986 and is a grassroots organization. NNIRR works to “promote a just immigration and refugee policy in the United States and to defend and expand the rights of all immigrants and refugees, regardless of immigration status” (<http://www.nnirr.org/~nnirrorg/drupal/about-us/mission>). NNIRR endorses policies that actively promote the fundamental human rights of all immigrants, rights that have been eroded since 9/11. This organization is populated with advocates that have a personal understanding of the impact of current immigration reforms. NNIRR only has three major reports accessible to the public for free. I include in my analysis these three comprehensive reports, which were written by NNIRR’s Human Rights Immigrant Community Action Network (HURRACANE). I also include all of the press releases that are posted concerning certain legislative decisions and the community outreach that resulted.

From each organization, I collect between 13 – 20 reports, articles and products that vary in length and cover a multitude of immigration issues that are shaping the current debate but also reflect the paralysis of this same debate.

Methodology: Analyzing the Material

The intellectual products selected provide a unique opportunity to examine some of the underlying forces that are shaping the discourse of immigration policy and reform. In order to develop a picture of the location of a think tank in relation to one another, I decided to measure different characteristics, inclinations, tendencies that shape the publications that they present to the world. These intellectual products also reveal a particular perception of the role, place, and value of immigrants in contemporary American society. When a product makes a truth claim about immigration, sometimes it is masking opinions and special interests in a form that conveys authority and expertise. Who does the think tank identify as the expert? First, each organization seeks to legitimize its position in the debate by relying on associations, on techniques of persuasion, on some form of “expertise” that serves to give authority to their knowledge claims. Second, the research products of each organization typically reflect a particular political rationale, one that justifies its position as it relates to an issue or problem with immigration policy. Economic impacts are a rationale, as are human rights that belong to individuals. Lastly, although this is not always completely noticeable, all of these documents can be seen as promoting the economic interest of someone or something and their research products confirm this. I will now go on to elaborate the three axes that I chose to measure the “intellectual products”.

Axis 1: the epistemological question (See Figure 1)

This axis seeks to measure the epistemological, that is, what kind of claims do these different organizations rely on to assert the truth of their publications. In order to further operationalize the concept of the epistemological, I created measures that define different positions on the continuum or axis. The different positions are identified on a scale of 1-10; **1** represents the most academic/scholarly/objective positions and **10** represents the knowledge claim that relies on narrative/popular/grassroots accounts. The indications that a product falls closer to 1 are: an authors credentials/experience in the field, the use of statistical data, presence of graphs, charts and tables, footnotes, a clear methodology and data sections along with intuitive feeling of objectivity.⁶ Indicators that the location is closer to a 10 include: little or no

⁶ I also judged this by inference: a product’s neutrality, the lack of emotion, and the distance the expert has from the subject being researched. The heavily academic product presents research in a distinctly academic way and forms a conclusion on the basis of

use of data, no mention of methodology, the use of personal stories, collective sentiment, narratives, and emotional language and the critical evaluations of experts of one's opponents. The products that locate an organization on this end of the axis are characteristically narrative and often use the evidence of consensus rather than facts.

An organization that occupies the middle of the continuum typically seeks out evidence to support or authenticate a logical/ideological position. Their publications rely less on presenting an original analysis or emotional narrative and more on existing and accepted body of logic or ideological assumptions. An indicator that moves publications away from the academic/scholarly pole is a reliance on academic logics that assumes reality instead of proving it.⁷ These articles do rely on facts and academic expertise but lack the rigor and disengagement of the academic. An indicator that moves articles away from the popular/narrative pole of the continuum is the use of consensus or public opinion without utilizing stories or narratives. This also can include the interpretation of quotes that are brought into a narrative without context to further their narrative.

Axis 2: the political rationale (See Figure 1)

Axis 2 asks what political rationale is being used to structure the article that is produced? I operationalized this concept of political rationale by looking at the arguments used to justify an organizations position on immigration. I conceptualized this rationale on a continuum of 1-10. The location represented by **1** understands immigration as an international concern that is intimately tied to globally recognized human rights. The other end of the axis, represented by **10**, signifies a political rationale that understands immigration only in the context of its direct impact on our nation. A characteristic of the location designated as 1 is an organization that does not yield on the primacy of human rights as an internationally sanctioned law in need of protection. The location of 1 is characterized by recommendations in position papers that are primarily concerned with issues of human rights and dignity. The location of 10 is characterized by an organization that blames immigration for the conditions in the U.S. However, praising immigration for good outcomes in the U.S. can land an organization on this side of the continuum.

findings (rather than the other way around). These articles are filled with academically rigorous analysis – they pursue the interest of academic prestige rather than of any particular interest group.

⁷ This includes the use of claims that appear to be consistent with scholarly logic, of interpretations (of legislation, of proposals, of historical facts), referring to “experts” (opinions, facts, claims, newspapers etc), presentations of one-sided evidence and assumptions (something that is not substantiated, that is ideological).

It is important to recognize that both a pro- and anti-immigration position paper can rely on either rationale. Also, papers that take dramatically different stances can rely on a similar rationale.

Axis 3: The "Interest" Represented

The final measure I chose to examine looks to see if a discernable interest is being promoted in the policy paper. This axis seeks to locate the think tanks product as one that continually promotes outcomes favorable to business interest or is it primarily promoting the interest of the worker, native or unauthorized. Understanding the stakeholders, the presenting immigration issue, and the recommendations allows me to figure out whose interest is best served if a proposal were to become a law. The numbers 1 through 10 again represent the location of the interests promoted by the organizations publications. The location represented by **1** signifies publications that significantly promote the best interest of business. For example, it appears as a recommendation to facilitate workers across borders or in support of filling demand for low-wage workers. Often a product combines the interest of workers and business. The other end of the axis is identified by **10** and represents the interests of workers such as advocating for good wages or siding with an unauthorized worker because he is simply following the demand, or feeding one's family and so forth. Essentially I am trying to discern if an organization seeks "legitimacy" by constantly criticizing proposals that interfere with the free market ideology. I also want to know if an organization always sides with the low-wage worker perhaps because this organization is guided by international rights standards. When an organization sides only with the native worker's interest then I know other motivations are at play. Still this organization would locate closer to the end of the axis designated by 10.

ANALYSIS

Each organization in this study is attempting to do the same thing, influence American immigration policy. The consensus is that the current system of immigration is problematic (at best) and in need of major restructuring. The organizations all are tackling the problem with their own practices and propensities highly influenced by the forces at play. Yet in spite of occupying the same social space, you will be amazed by the differences that exist among and between these organizations. The different strategies used to inform immigration policy debate are worth deconstructing. Unforeseen similarities arise, but the issue of immigration remains as complicated as ever. If Medvetz is right that think tanks draw their

existence from various fields of power, then each think tank observed will carry the imprint of the established forms, strategies and procedures that correspond to these proximate institutions. We learn a lot as we observe how a think tank pursues its legitimacy, its political access and its audience. Understanding how the think tank perceives a problem and articulates a solution tells us a lot about its location.

There are a lot of competing interests that are at stake in immigration reform. The five organizations studied exhibit different combinations of the various interests that originate in the fields of power. Each organization prioritizes these interests in a way that shapes their connection to an issue. After discussing the general approach of each organization to the immigration policy debates, I will engage in a relational analysis of the dynamics at play which will locate them in a social space defined by the three axes described above. I will conclude with a discussion of which model I think is the most effective among the five, and explain why I think their particular characteristics put them in position to gain the access necessary to influence immigration policy.

Constructing the Problem

(1) National Immigration Forum (NIF) stands on the principle that immigration is valuable to our nation and the current immigration laws, which are built on fear and exclusion, not only threaten our security, but also undermine our economic well-being. Thus NIF believes the problem is embedded in our immigration policies. The value of immigration is recognized throughout America's history as reflected in the belief that America is the 'the land of opportunities' (National Immigration Forum 2011i). Immigrants historically exceeded their previous potential for the benefit of our country (Noorani 2009). But current immigration policy is misguided, outdated and largely ineffective. The current emphasis of the law on enforcement and national security misallocates our valuable resources. They also impose burdens and erect barriers that inhibit potentially productive people from entering the country. This fearful understanding of immigration and enforcement only "weakens our international standing, national security and economic health" (Noorani 2009; 1).

The majority of NIF's briefs and reports understand the various issues in terms of its implications for our economy, national security and families. "Today's immigration system is ineffective because it is not permitted to adjust to market or workforce demands, and it forces too many families to endure long separation" (National Immigration Forum 2011i). To this end, NIF examines each issue in terms of the

market laws of supply and demand. The economic reality of this country is that there is a fairly constant demand for labor and it is readily available, if they could only get here legally. Due to our economic alliances with Latin America and the expanding global economy (National Immigration Forum 2008a), the economic conditions that create the demand for low and high skill labor in this country is easily met by the reserve of foreign workers in need of work, and this fact makes immigration an unavoidable phenomenon (National Immigration Forum 2011a, 2011j). The result of bad law is the presence of illegal or unauthorized immigrants. To NIF unauthorized immigrants are not bad people, but rather *rational* people “making the decisions to risk being in the U.S. illegally in order to work and make money at abundantly available jobs” (National Immigration Forum 2008a).

The unauthorized worker faces useless barriers to legalization that create backlogs, separate the legal American’s from unauthorized parents, inhibit workplace advancement and leave people without access to needed services (National Immigration Forum 2008c). The high fees involved in the naturalization process deter many eligible immigrants from naturalizing (National Immigration Forum 2008a, 2008b, 2011a, 2011f, 2011g). The laws discourage students and high-skilled workers from settling here, something that is detrimental to our competitive edge and ultimately our future (National Immigration Forum 2011a, 2011k). Immigration law makes it hard for highly skilled immigrants to come and contribute to our economy. We train high-skilled immigrants at our universities yet encourage them to go home at the end of their education – see, “forging return on investment” (2011a).

NIF makes a case that immigration reform is an economic issue. They support their economic ‘reality’ view of the problem by engaging in a ‘cost-benefit’ type analysis. NIF analyzes the economic burden of enforcement measures on the state and local economies by analyzing the costs of different state initiatives (2011c, 2011e, 2011l), using fiscal projections to measure the real costs that these measures impose (2011e), calculating and measuring the benefits to industries that rely heavily on the immigrant workforce (2011e), calculating losses to small businesses where immigrants shop, calculating the loss to consumers who cannot purchase cheaper products (2011c) and most importantly, calculating the costs to our safety due to misallocation of resources. NIF also measures the cost of anti-immigrant legislation and concludes it is a waste of assets and it is compromising our competitive edge in the global economy.

(2) The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) blames immigration for contributing to the social and economic ills that exist in America. FAIR believes that our immigration laws must reflect the interests of our nation first. FAIR wants reform to address the uncontrollable flow of immigrants, to ensure Americans access to jobs, to enforce sanctions on businesses that hire these illegals. For FAIR, a well-functioning immigration system features policies that engage in stricter law enforcement and border controls that stem the flow of illegal workers in ways that preserve the best possible quality of life for Americans. Immigration, both legal and illegal, is driving down the working and living standards of the American people, and the American worker suffers the most.

FAIR's briefs and research reports address three major themes. The first theme is how immigration impacts our population. They emphasize in their publications how immigrants lower the living standards in America. FAIR, using the logic of labor economics, draws conclusions about the negative impact that illegal immigration has on 'economic well-being', such as, compromising the employment opportunities, diminishing working conditions and wages of working and low-skilled American workers (Federation For American Immigration Reform 2010f, 2010g Ruark and Gram 2011; Swartz 2009a). FAIR consistently focused on foreigners taking opportunities away from citizens (Federation For American Immigration Reform 2010c).

The second theme is the need to expose advocates of "amnesty legislation" (Federation For American Immigration Reform 2010a, 2010b; Ruark 2009; Swartz 2009). These articles explicitly sought to expose the cohorts of "special interest" who are trying to push amnesty legislation. This aim to expose individuals is characteristic of FAIR's analysis. They make claims that there is evidence of a massive coalition of organizations and interest groups that promote their special interest at the expense of the public. FAIR attacks Obama, as they claim, for appearing to favor upholding our laws while in fact he is enacting "non-enforcement policies" (2010a). They conclude from an analysis of Obama's first year in office that "the overriding objectives of this administration are to enact a massive amnesty for current illegal aliens and vastly expand future flows of immigration to the United States" (Swartz, 2009b: 2). The claims made by FAIR in these publications reveals much about where they stand.

The last theme is FAIR's focus on exposing specific 'myths' and discrediting 'expert' knowledge that undermine FAIR's strongly held values and position on immigration (Federation for American

Immigration Reform 2010c, 2010, 2010e). The contradiction of FAIR's effort seems obvious. They seek legitimacy by using the tools of academic logic, yet their findings are markedly vague and biased. For example, in the paper "Illegal Immigration and Hate Crimes: Is there a Relationship?" FAIR calls into question a study done by Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) that argues anti-immigration advocates are guilty of hate speech, using as evidence a surge in hate crimes to substantiate this claim. FAIR then responds with a critical examination of SPLC's methodology, which concludes that SPLC's decision to not divide their figure of reported hate crimes (this changes the number into the likelihood of a being victim to a hate crime) by 100,000 Hispanic residents was an intentional and belligerent "attack on the role of an informed citizenry in the operation of a democratic society." This focus of analysis is a common tool that FAIR sees as one of its most critical functions: to "distinguish the reform that the public seeks from the deceptive package of measures that the immigration lobby is peddling".

http://www.fairus.org/site/PageNavigator/facts/data_research3327).

FAIR asserts that it is pursuing the reform agenda favored by the public. They often use a simple version of labor economic logic that allows them to conclude that immigration is the primary contributor to the woes of the American working poor. The logic declares that if immigration goes up, then immigration must be the cause of what goes down. But while FAIR uses this labor economics reasoning to appeal to public opinion, when their logic is inconsistent FAIR drops this logic if it fails to support their conclusions.

(3) The National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR) sees the current immigration system as a brutal and ruthless regime that normalizes the violation of human rights by criminalizing one's immigration status. For NNIRR, our immigration system simply jeopardizes the rights of all immigrants and refugees. The real problem is not immigration. Immigration is a concept that embodies the direct consequence of the restructuring of the international economic system. So current immigration policy reflects efforts to regulate the past and as a result focuses on "immigration control and policing that criminalizes immigration status, normalizes forcible separation of families, destabilizes communities and workplaces, and fuels widespread civil rights violations" (HURRICANE 2010). NNIRR believes that the emphasis on security has instigated a human rights crisis throughout America.

NNIRR argues that immigration policy in its current form has an alarming human cost and the criminalization of one's status impacts communities, families and fundamentally people. The principle

guiding NNIRR is that “all persons, all humans in the United States, regardless of immigration status, have rights and are equal before the law” (HURRICANE, 2010).

NNIRR’s publications are popular narrative accounts that reflect the community sentiment. Their legitimacy to a claim that their knowledge is true cannot be substantiated using statistical analysis or academic rigor. Rather, NNIRR’s position fully rests upon the human aspect of immigration, that is the inhumanity of policies that see immigrants as a defective “criminalized” product that has to be detained, deported or ignored. NNIRR’s style is reflected in titles such as "Documentation begins with dialogue" and "Dialogue means sharing our stories, our dreams and our struggles to decide the justice we want". NNIRR wants to establish as facts one’s experience. Their intimate connection to the issue gives them the unique power to create a new knowledge base. Knowledge expressed through narrative and human experiences is legitimate in that it is real, but this knowledge falls outside of the traditional type utilized by the think tank.

NNIRR does have authority to speak on behalf of all immigrants but can this authority reach into the think tank world? Their press releases conjure up a sense of solidarity and hope in the effort for reform. Tragedies are turned into ammunition and inspire the community. There is something powerful about NNIRR in that they actively are trying to inform policy not through traditional means of academic research but by trying to establish experience as facts and reality, as convincing as graphs. Their products reflect this understanding.

(4) The Urban Institute (UI) represents a fundamentally different organization from the previous three. UI structures the problem of immigration in terms of the failure of stakeholders to grasp the complexities of immigration and the real outcomes of legislation. It sees the problem in terms of a failure to look at outcomes down the road. UI is notably pragmatic in their research products and targets a wide variety of stakeholders. While UI sees immigration policy primarily as a balancing act between competing interests, its research is meant to inspire thoughtful considerations of long-term consequences and shift debates towards more effective public policy. UI believes that the problem at hand is that stakeholders are often ignoring the facts to pursue conflicting interests. It is this pragmatic approach to the problem that guides their production. This is a process that involves careful analysis and considerations of the important trends and dynamics playing out that, if took into consideration, could lead to effective policy development and implementation.

UI in its mission statement alludes to how it views the problem: “Our mission: the Urban Institute gathers data, conducts research, evaluates programs, offers technical assistance overseas, and educates Americans on social and economic issues — to foster sound public policy and effective government.” (<http://www.urban.org/about/>) Its pragmatic orientation speaks to their belief that the best solution is often a balancing act between competing and opposing interests. It is no surprise that UI chooses to educate, through careful analysis, the competing powers with a stake in reform, so that reason can diminish any blatant powerful hold on the issue. Because the immigration policy debate has changed dramatically after 9/11, such that enforcement policies/security issues have come to dominate, UI functions to inform the stakeholders of the consequences of unsound public policy and ineffective legislation that seeks only to make America safe. But UI counterbalances those who argue exclusively in favor of all immigration.

UI, I believe, provides the purest academic research and analysis, something that I associate with their relentless transparency. In all of the products analyzed, the authors always made an effort to identify the evidence or data, which the product relied on. They let the informed reader know if fieldwork was done including such things as interviews, site visits, semi-structured protocols when observing behaviors and so on (Chandry, Capps, Pedroza, Castañeda, Santos and Scott 2010). They explicitly told the reader what ambiguous terms such as Latino or unauthorized immigrant would signify (Capps and Fortuny 2007). Methodology sections are regularly included with excruciating detail (De Leon, Maronick, De Vita and Boris 2009). This is just to say, unlike FAIR who took generous liberties with their analysis, UI made themselves accountable for every step of their research.

(5) Migration Policy Institute (MPI) structures the problem of immigration policy in the US as one that in effect misunderstands the national interest particularly if it only focuses on national security and enforcement. MPI sees that the complexities of the issues demand long-range thinking and that the consequences of a narrow vision will be far reaching. MPI sees a major problem with the immigration system as an unwillingness to recognize and respond to the complicated dynamics driving patterns of immigration and to the bad consequences of implemented policies.

MPI fundamentally believes that immigration policy should move in the direction of a more cooperative management of migration of all people. MPI believes that thoughtful, intelligent, and rights-

based immigration will promote economic growth and national security. It believes that immigrants if given a chance will become positive contributors, economic and social. Immigration policy requires a balanced analysis using reliable data and involving all the stakeholders. Finally, MPI believes that immigration policy seen in the context of international migrations benefits long-term planning. The policy makers in Washington are problematic in that they do not have this orientation.

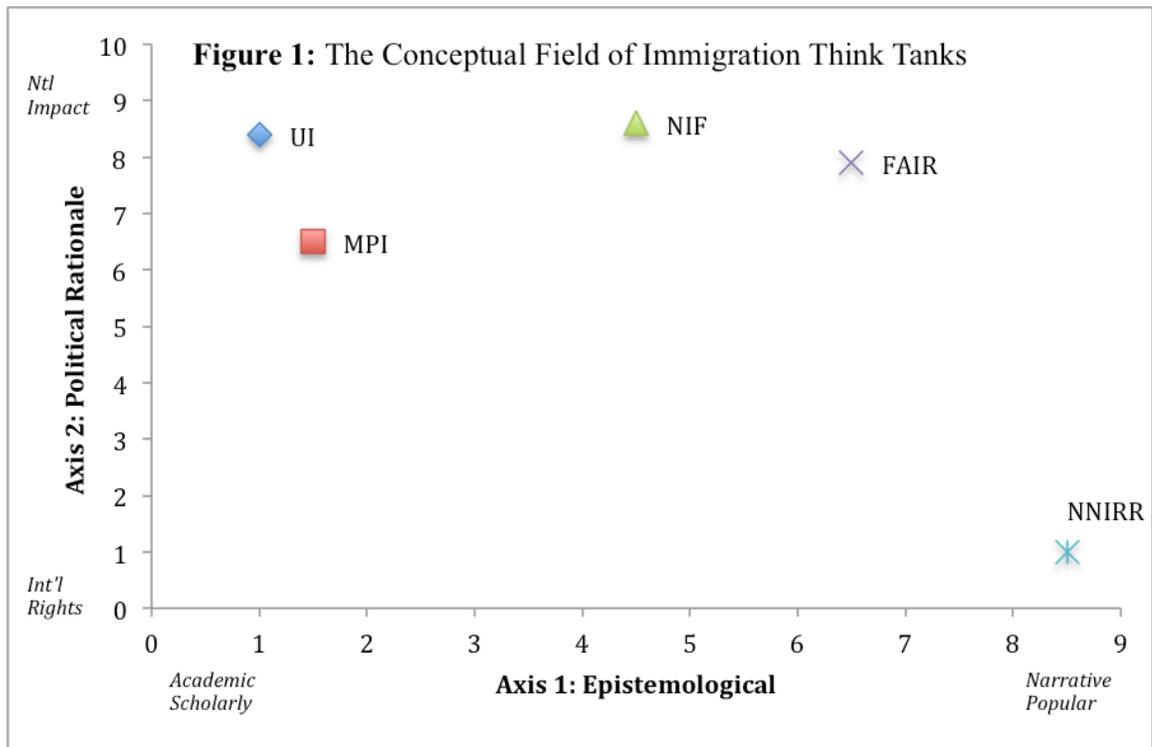
MPI falls closely in line for legitimacy by association with academia, much like UI. The academic credentials of the authors of the majority of intellectual products reviewed ranks number one in terms of PhD's and J.D.'s from our nation's best universities. (i.e., PhD's in sociology, professors of economics, sociology and law). One author had PhD. skills in demographics analysis while a co-other author had a law degree, studied economics and had extensive experience with think tanks (Hook 2010)) In addition, the experience in the field of immigration is unmatched, including people who have served in the highest levels of government. (i.e., a former Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization Services (Mittelstadt, Speaker, Meissener, Chisthi 2001)). When the author of a report dealt primarily with data, they explained in detail the possible pitfalls and how they would bridge any gaps when the data did not exist (Migration Policy Institute 2007b).

Negotiating the Conceptual Field of Immigration Think Tanks

Upon a close analysis of the sample of documents from each of the five organizations, one thing is clear. Immigration is a profoundly complex issue. Embedded in the issue is what some believe to be irreconcilable differences. How can we have profitable businesses and cheap products while paying our workers better than low wage? How can we be law abiding citizens but allow illegal immigrants to walk the streets? How can we be safe if anyone can cross our borders? How can we allow the criminalization and violation of the human rights of an entire class of people simply because they have the status of immigrant? The consensus is that immigration policy is not working, nor will it go away.

The five think tanks that I studied are in effect dynamic hybrid organizations that seek to gain influential access to the immigration policy debate by securing degrees of legitimacy from the more established fields of power. Each of these organizations assimilates the practices and priorities from one or more of these fields and continually seeks to accumulate more legitimacy by association with these fields. However, because of this hybrid structure, these organizations also seek to maintain a considerable degree

of freedom and flexibility. The complexities of the immigration debate are filtered through these hybrid structures, which produce intellectual products that both are influenced by the field and in turn try to influence the debate. The intellectual product represents an organizations location as expressed in its language, concepts, structures and worldview. The rest of the paper will be devoted to understanding the organizations in relation to one another in terms of the three axes outline in the methodology section. The image below is a visual tool through which one can engage in an understanding of practices and propensities. I leave out axis three from the figure below but will conclude the analysis with its relevancy.



Axis one measures the epistemological aspect of the think tanks production. Moving from left to right, from the academic to the narrative, these positions represent what I saw as the primary characteristics of the knowledge claim that a publication makes to project its legitimacy, authority. Axis two measures the political rationale that shapes the focus of their products, moving up from a focus on internationally recognized human rights to a more narrow focus on national impact. The position of an organization on these two axes gives us interesting insight into the role of knowledge and motives in the formation of each

organizations knowledge production. It gives us insight into “the social conditions that shape the think tanks production.” (Medvetz 2008; 5)

Implications of an Academic Orientation

The two organizations, most similar to each other in terms of epistemological orientation, are UI and MPI. They are particularly distinct from the rest of the organizations due to the level of academic credibility. MPI and UI rely on similar methods of analysis and place equal emphasis on coming up with policies that take into account the complex realities and interests that come together to form the stakes of the immigration debate. Their similarity on the epistemological axis is reflected in the collaborative efforts of their experts in a handful of the articles that I studied (Batalova and Mchugh 2010; Hanson 2009). The academic orientation of these two organizations allowed for a deep engagement with the complexities of the issues.

These two organizations both produce publications that seek to uphold the traditional academic standards of objectivity in their research. Their strategy of informing policy is done primarily through the analysis of data, the inclusion of many stakeholders and a comprehensive understanding of the depth of the issues. Their style of analysis points to the trends in proposed legislation or current legislation or in demographic studies that inform the stakeholders. Their analysis precedes their recommendation rather than the other way around. Their research aims at more comprehensive focus on different but specific problem with immigration policy and either leads to recommendations by the think tank expert or offers stakeholders information so that they can have a better grasp of the real effects of the policy decision. The one distinction between the two is that MPI’s international focus sometimes leads the data. What I mean by that is, MPI seems to recommend more than what the data or research requires which I believe reflects MPI’s mission to place immigration in a global context. Their recommendations reflect international standards that ignore the national security concerns of many Americans.

Regardless, these organizations level of objectivity allows them to present the complex web of issues and interest that are driving the immigration debate and allows stakeholders to take into account the consequences of their policy demands on others, including the immigrants themselves. In the UI publications I examined, the author’s epistemological orientation allowed for such conclusions as the need of American businesses for low-wage foreign workers (Hanson 2009); to recognize that the economic laws

of supply and demand encourage the flow of unauthorized workers and current immigration law cannot stop it; to recognize the erosion of confidence in law enforcement and the rule of law, where enforcement within our borders lacks consistency and where it traumatizes US citizens by breaking up families. UI is able to recognize and consider a large range of stakeholders in their policy discussions including Congress, government agencies, state and local governments and agencies, enforcement agencies, local community leaders, community based organizations and advocacy groups, business community and the think tank universe itself.

MPI is able to conceptualize the extent of potential consequences that bear on individual rights, the rule of law, our cities, and our competitiveness in the global market, our national security, and our unique international standing in the world. The frustration over the “polarizing rhetoric” that “has crowded out thoughtful, workable policy” (www.mpi.com) gives MPI and UI standing and legitimacy in the think tank world. The complexity of their analysis and their methodological approach gives everyone better and more reliable information.

It is apparent that an academic orientation is characterized by a sense of distance from the issue being studied. The reliance on thorough analysis and objectivity gives the impression of detachment from any outcome and, in fact, it gives room for consideration of complexities that are missed or minimized in interest-driven research. UI and MPI’s location is characterized by a pragmatic approach to the debate. While the political rationale of each organization could alter their relationship and create differences, their objective standard often leads to similar conclusions. This locates UI and MPI, near each other, on the axis represented by the academic and scholarly designation.

In reference to axis two, UI’s self-proclaimed focus on collecting data and informing the stakeholders so that they can generate sound public policy and effective government speaks directly to UI’s political rationale which locates UI close to the end of the axis designated by national interest. MPI, with its self-proclaimed emphasis on the study of global migration trends, gives weight to international considerations that UI might not consider. But MPI balances interests and does not give additional weight to international considerations when they know it is not relevant in a given debate. MPI lands below UI on this axis but stays in the same general location, which of course is the reality of their relational space anyway.

While MPI's academic credentials surpassed the other four organizations, exceeding even UI, I relied on the samples of documents to inform their placement on axis one and made my conclusions based on a comparison of their conclusions and recommendations. Where UI makes recommendations that mostly reflect the data or in some cases simply provides analysis pointing towards identifiable trends, MPI's recommendations hinted at the existence of an agenda hiding beneath this academic objectivity. Perhaps UI hides its political rationale more effectively, but in comparison, MPI seemed to favor policy recommendations that included human rights considerations, beyond the U.S. border, as an equal stakeholder. MPI's mission is the effective management of global immigration. Their recommendations reflected international standards that sometimes did not bring to bear the national security concerns of many Americans. For example, MPI includes in one of its papers the effect that an immigrant worker in America has on both the economy of America and the economy of the sending country when one supports their families at home through remittances (Fix, Meissner and Papdemetrious 2005). UI always included the national security concerns as an obvious component of US immigration policy. However UI's recommendations still could be the same as MPI's recommendations when its analysis spotted a trend that had adverse consequences to our own national interest.

Their position on the academic axis is probably the major characteristic that determines their organizational structure. What I conclude about MPI and UI's structural position on axis one is that in many ways the pursuit of this academic style of research limits the use of persuasion - that is the association with this academic legitimacy makes the organizations adhere to a standard that comes to be the defining characteristic of any organization that occupies this space. This location is populated by organizations that grasp complexities of an issue much more frequently than their ideological or interest-based counter-parts and thus they serve a valuable role in informing policy. But the distance that is created by this academic legitimacy might affect one's ability to fundamentally influence the policy debate. Their grasp of detail is not that digestible to the non-scholar because the greater the distance from the real effects of policy in terms of human connection, the greater likelihood your message is not heard.

The relationships that play out among the three remaining organizations are pretty interesting to explore. Their locations in the social space as seen through the axis analysis lead to interesting observations.

NIF, FAIR and NNIRR

Gauging the location of NIF and FAIR on axis one was not nearly as intuitive or as clear-cut as it was for UI and MPI. Both NIF and FAIR draw heavily on some version of economic logic, which guides their understanding of the issue. But because their publications vary considerably in content, pinning down their epistemological orientation was difficult.

NIF always uses economic logic to structure their arguments and they present their facts in a framework that makes it relatable; so their use of evidence in their analysis does not follow the academic rigor used by UI and MPI. FAIR, on the other hand, presents their evidence in an academic format, while making use of economic logic in its argument; however, where NIF depends almost exclusively on this logic, FAIR engages in academic analysis when it serves their interests. These inconsistencies help to explain each organization's location on axis one. The use of the logics of economics or academics fails the objectivity and neutral standard when the evidence is not objectively obtained or when the rationale underlying their investigation is clearly ideological. Hence the movement away from the academic end begins for both NIF and FAIR.

An understanding of their location on axis one gives us insight into each organization's self-representations. NIF and FAIR's use of these economic logics sort of embodies the fuzzy nature of what defines a think tank. But my focus is not to judge their intentions; rather it is whether or not their location and relational space opens up the road to influence.

NIF's production is shaped by the principles of economic theory and they use the language and discourse of free market logic. Their products rely on evidence that strongly appeals to the rationale of the markets in terms of cost/benefit analysis, which anchors their products in the academic sphere. However, outside of the evidence that is used for a cost/benefits analysis and that is used to substantiate the laws of supply and demand, NIF seems to avoid attempting to prove something. NIF's legitimacy seems to derive from the familiar logic of the free market discourse, which also speaks to the American value of being the land of opportunity.

FAIR, on the other hand, engages in a more academic style of analysis – making use of statistical analysis and informative graphs and tables. This again makes clear the ever-present pull that the traditional academic standard of objectivity and neutrality has when an organization seeks legitimacy and a seat at the

table of influence. This makes my analysis interesting because one discovers the ways in which organizations seek academic legitimacy and the patterns of deception. FAIR's use of language and their style of argumentation shows how deeply enmeshed they are in their ideological assumptions and rarely do they come up with something new. In fact, most of their reports and briefs seem to repackage their principles in slightly different ways. The constant use of arguments meant to undermine anyone who offers another point of view leads me to believe FAIR is motivated to protect its fragile, unsubstantiated worldview.

NIF's evidence is not rigorous in the classical sense, but it is very persuasive in the context of the immigration debate. Because the language of the free market is the language we use in much of our daily life and our economic interests typically coincide with our personal interests, evidence that is evaluated in terms of costs/benefits actually appears quite legitimate. Mitchell (2009:388) discusses the way in which economics diverge from other social sciences when it comes to persuading people that what it says is true because "the sociotechnical world that economics describes cannot easily be rendered testable. For this reason, compared to many other sciences; economics attaches less importance to having clear tests and often seems to pride itself on not needing them." This is consistent with what I saw in NIF's policy papers. They generally lack analysis that makes use of clear tests, yet they seem to command authority regardless.

FAIR, on the other hand, provides a lot of analysis and depends heavily on the appearance of academic rigor to substantiate their position. However, their positions seem irrational, reductive and biased. I am still left baffled at the argumentation techniques that FAIR uses. They declare with absolute certainty that the public favors their enforcement agenda for immigration. They take personally any opposing views. They see everything disagreeable to their position as a conspiracy – against the American public, the country, and our most vulnerable population. They are relentlessly critical of amnesty advocates or anyone who presents evidence to the contrary as evidence of how "public opinion has been thwarted, and how the democratic process has been subverted by special interests whose objectives may not be in the best interest of America" (Ruark 2009:1). One last comment about FAIR's style of argumentation – after engaging in very hostile criticisms of the opposition and accusing them of attacking our democracy, FAIR concludes that their interest "may not" be in the best interest of America. Due to evidence of overwhelming irrational thinking, I located FAIR closer to the narrative end of axis one. They are simply unreliable with any use of

logic. NIF is located closer to the middle between the academic and the narrative. Their appeal to the logic of cost/benefit analysis combines some objectivity with the narrative appeal of the free markets.

Immigration is good for prosperity, yours and mine, and the benefits are identifiable.

The respective position of NIF and FAIR on axis two also illuminates an interesting dynamic. One would think that NIF, who advocates for inclusionary policies and places great emphasis on family unification, is motivated by a sympathetic understanding of human rights and dignity. Conversely, one would assume that FAIR's exclusionary rhetoric would rely on protecting national interests in its purest form. However, NIF's advocacy for family reunification is framed in economic terms. The rationales given for their support of family unification are: that family members help each other to "pool their resources"; that the difficulty of uniting family members makes it hard for countries to attract workers; that workers without family are less productive when forced to endure separation (National Immigration Forum, 2008b). FAIR, on the other hand, while favoring exclusionary measures, often frames an issue in terms of human dignity: illegal immigration increase the vulnerability of immigrants to human trafficking (Federation For American Immigration Reform 2010d): working conditions that immigrants endure are worse than indentured servitude, their illegality leaves them powerless in the face of unscrupulous businesses (Federation For American Immigration Reform 2010g). Knowing that FAIR will frame an outcome in human rights language with the intention of barring immigrants causes confusion on axis two. It is easier to conclude that NIF is solely focused on the national interest even when a benefit of their analysis is protecting the rights and dignity of everyone. For this reason I located NIF further up the axis of political rationale, that is national interest, and placed FAIR slightly closer to the middle, a mixture of national interest and international rights. This is where their rhetoric or argumentation places them.

Axis three turns out is a very important indicator of the legitimacy of NIF's position relative to FAIR's position. NIF escapes a contradiction that traps FAIR because of its location on axis three. FAIR is more geared towards the interests of workers, but not all workers, only American workers. NIF's primary rationale is the goal of enhancing economic well-being and its consistent articulation reaches a much wider audience of varying interest. NIF's policy recommendations are cost effective, appeal to a larger audience, promote the interest of both national security and economic well-being. NIF benefits from its focus on our national interest and overall economic well-being because they do not exclude any interest if it can stand up

to the cost benefit analysis. FAIR's contradictory use of logic and its claim to uphold the standards of international human rights fails because their understanding of immigration concerns cannot hold all of the complexities. Stakeholders who are interested in human rights will not listen to FAIR because FAIR'S conclusions always exclude a good portion of this stakeholder's interest.

NNIRR occupies the position on axis one that reveals a deep commitment to the immigrant population. They derive their authority from the use of popular/narrative evidence. They take pride in the power of the grassroots and actively pursue ways to garner their own legitimacy as an authoritative body of knowledge. The thing that NNIRR suffers from is the lack of association with one of the fields of power in knowledge production. Their publications create a narrative through its extensive collections of human rights violations. They seek legitimacy by putting a human face on the issue of immigration, appealing to establish knowledge founded in shared human experiences of suffering, loss, fear and abuse that the immigration population engages with everyday. They also seek legitimacy by shaming the current administration's failure to act of these violations.

While essentially all of their press releases and short briefs make use of popular/narrative evidence, NNIRR shows academic rigor in their three longer reports (Human Rights Immigrant Community Action Network, 2008, 2009, 2010). These reports looked as legitimate as the next: executive summaries, methodology and purpose sections, key recommendations, overview of trends and graphs. But again this suggests the importance of appearing legitimate by associating with the standards of academia. As stated before, if you are seeking to have political relevancy, then it is important to appear somewhat academic. So this is the struggle that confronts a grassroots organization like NNIRR. A knowledge base that is not firmly rooted in the world of academia still must engage with the structural devices of the academic in order to bring an authoritative feel to their research reports. Even then, their evidence may be seen as credible but is this enough to give them access, to move them up on the hierarchy of effective think tanks? It doesn't appear to be the case.

NNIRR's location on axis 2 makes it even more difficult for them to even stand in the room of influence, let alone sit. By just looking at Figure 1, you can see that NNIRR is the outlier among the organizations. NNIRR is on the extreme end of the political rationale axis defined as international concerns. The immediate reality of the debate on immigration in the US is that one must include as an interest the

fundamental issue of national security, particularly after 9/11. To be so ideological as to ignore this concern is to essentially have the door slammed in your face. So NNIRR, I would argue is developing a unique body of knowledge founded on the systematic documentation and analysis of stories, but their location on axis two gives them little chance to exert influence. The hope is that grassroots interests can find a seat at the table and there is much work to do.

So the extreme positions taken by some organizations in the debate, that stand for unwillingness to compromise, place themselves in a location that might defeat their purposes. FAIR believes that immigration and our failure to enforce the law is the fundamental issue. FAIR argues that the system's failure to hold unauthorized immigrants and employers accountable is encouraging the flow of "illegal" immigrants and impoverishing the life of Americans. So in one sentence FAIR criminalizes immigration, ignores the reality the laws of supply and demand, assumes "illegals" are "taking" jobs actually desired by Americans and denigrates immigration enforcement and businesses because no one is held accountable to the law. FAIR's extremism sees this scenario as undermining our national interest of social and economic well-being. The social fabric is weakened when laws encourage illegal behavior, which by definition encourages a lack of respect for the law. Our collective economic well-being is lowered because jobs are lost and our governmental services are stressed. This simplistic version of the problem, while appealing to nation interest, ignores the realities of the nation and this undeniably diminishes FAIR's political relevancy.

The same characteristic of extremism is even more apparent with the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR). NNIRR believes that our immigration system fundamentally violates the rights of all immigrants and refugees and its emphasis on enforcement and border control criminalizes an entire population simply because of their status as immigrants. NNIRR views the criminalization of one's status as something that allows for the subsequent violations of everyone's civil rights. NNIRR is founded on its understanding of immigration as a by-product of global economic restructuring and therefore the immigrant has no control over its status as an immigrant. It is odd but one can place NNIRR and FAIR together in their attempts to gain influence in the immigration policy debate.

When locating these two organizations on the epistemological axis, I was surprised by the use of similar rhetorical and argumentative tactics in their publications. This understanding led me to their relative locations on the epistemological axis. While NNIRR primarily uses narrative and rhetoric of violations, it is

apparent that FAIR, while appearing to adhere to academic rigor, cannot avoid using ideological language. Both FAIR and NNIRR lose credibility with their blaming strategies. FAIR produced papers that relied on persuasion and assumptions not objective or balanced analysis, and because of this they are located closer to NNIRR than one would imagine.

FAIR and NNIRR both have an appeal to the emotional side. They both advocate the need for extreme measures in immigration reform but they rely on different rationales: FAIR's commitment to the law versus NNIRR's commitment to humanity. They, I think, hurt their legitimacy when they refuse to compromise. They both call for moratoriums (immigration vs. enforcement); accountability (criminals vs. rights abusers); ending discriminatory policies (racial and ethnic favoritism vs. law enforcement based on racial and ethnic profiling). This unexpected connection between these two organizations that appear radically different, upon further review, makes sense. Because of their extreme dogmatic stances, each organization essentially ends up preaching to their own choir. If it is influencing the policy makers that they seek, they are both left out unless they can increase their choir, that is energize their grassroots base that can apply pressure to the players in the political field and thereby gain access.

CONCLUSION

While there are some major limitations to this study, there are also valuable observations made. My analysis presented a unique look into the world of immigration think tanks and a more prolonged engagement with this material would only produce a more comprehensive understanding of the inner workings of these organizations. One of my initial hopes was to discover a path of legitimacy for grassroots knowledge so that it could contend with the expertise of more traditional sources of knowledge. By accident, using the axes as my guide, I realize that NNIRR at least has too many flaws to even consider a seat at the table of influence.

It is no surprise that these five organizations mirror somewhat the paralysis of the immigration policy debate. FAIR and NNIRR embody the extreme positions of the debate that are unwilling to compromise. Their guiding principles seem to be irreconcilable with any pragmatic solution because these principles ignore some of the more powerful stakeholders in the immigration policy debate. This makes them markedly less relevant to policymakers. UI and MPI are valuable players but in terms of influencing the debate they may need to reconsider ways to motivate the stakeholders. They currently are significant

role players with some influence but often they only supply information. This style does not appeal to the masses and is hard to package.

What became clear when reading the products, the most persuasive documents were the ones that appealed to the interests of many, even those with contradictory interests. I discovered in my analysis of intellectual products that the combination of appealing to national interests and economic interests that also alerted stakeholders as to when their interest in security had gone overboard could be the most persuasive. NIF, by occupying a location closest to middle on both the epistemological and interest axes, and by occupying a location that privileges our national interest in security seems destined to gain more influence. NIF's separation from strict academic standards is countered by their use of the language of the free markets and cost/benefit analysis. This language also has an appeal with its optimism. NIF avoids the paralysis of ideological thinking. The fact that NIF, by using cost/benefit analysis, can conclude that inclusionary policies are less expensive than exclusionary ones allows them to appeal to those who are pro-immigrant without having to assume that label.

Because of this unique position that NIF occupies, I argue that NIF will likely have the most influence on future policy debates of the five organizations I analyzed. The introduction of a cost/benefits analysis that favors an inclusive and rights-based immigration policy will only pave the way for a more accommodating environment for immigrants and their families. The paralysis of the debate and the criminalization of immigrants will undeniably benefit from this development.

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