

necessary to the policy process, and that it is worth living with some contemporary tribulations in order to advance that goal.

Note

*The views expressed in this paper are entirely those of the author and should not be construed as representing those of the U.S. General Accounting Office.

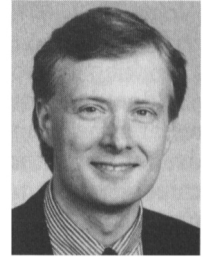
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Giving Businesses What They Need*

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It is time for a preliminary look at how political science, both in its teaching and research components, can contribute to meeting the needs of the business community. The business sector has generally been bypassed, or even ignored, by many political scientists whose applied connection tends to focus on the governmental sector. This is quite understandable for the links forged between political science and government are obvious. Not so obvious, but nevertheless of growing importance, is the link between the business community, academic business schools, and the discipline of political science.

The strengthening of this link will become more feasible as the global economic arena becomes the norm in which business is conducted in a manner in which understanding of foreign political situations is critical. If this assumption is valid, we will expect to see increased demand for political scientists, especially those whose subspecialties are international relations and/or area studies.

Another fertile subset of political science that can prove useful to business is policy science. Since policy science frequently crosses multidisciplinary lines in its analysis of programs and policies, it is one subspecialty that should have an easier time forging new links to business. Bobrow aptly notes that policy issues do not "respect entrenched disciplinary boundaries that

owe their existence . . . to the rigidities of academic institutions" (Bobrow 1987, 6). For this reason, policy analysts do not need to be convinced to venture outside of their discipline as might be the case for the political theorist. We are also reminded that policy analysts are often called upon to practice the art of persuasion as they present their analyses to those in government (Majone 1989, 9). This skill is certainly useful to successful interaction with a business community that frequently uses persuasive techniques to its advantage. Finally, policy analysts are particularly well suited to serve business because they are already "sensitive to the . . . realities with which politicians and administrators must live and work" (Hofferbert 1990, 19). Replace the words "politicians and administrators" with business people and managers, and we have a good fit between the policy analyst and business. In short, the policy analyst is accustomed to rubbing shoulders with those outside of his discipline in matters of research.

Meeting this nascent demand, however, does not mean that the business community will be banging on our office doors. This is because the business community views its needs in an applied manner and generally perceives academics as unable to produce results that can be rapidly absorbed by their personnel and managers. In short, what we produce

in the form of research is regarded as not relevant to their needs. This is unfortunate, for many political scientists do have years of accumulated knowledge that, if channeled in an applied manner, can be of enormous practical use to the business community.

Improving Relationships

The key to improving the relationship between political science and business is twofold. First, political scientists must accept that an applied relationship between our discipline and business is desirable and to be encouraged just as it is with government. Secondly, political scientists must be flexible enough to research topics of interest to business and to compile results easily consumed by that sector.

The latter is not an easy task, for academics tend to focus on theory and explanation because that is the generally accepted scholarly measurement by which to assess a political scientist's work. Yet, business is also looking for prescription, prediction, and forecasting, something which academics often avoid.

Lastly, let us not overlook the obvious fact that business is often construed in a negative manner by many political scientists. In his research, Vogel points out that "relatively few political scientists study business at all" as it pertains to poli-

tics and that many political scientists are “critical of the role of business” (Vogel 1987, 65). Such an attitude is certainly not conducive to developing a working relationship with business nor does it encourage applied research on business issues. Not to be overlooked is the fact that tenure and career advancement depend on acceptance by our political scientist peers, and this tends to result in research that will help us attain that objective.

Why then should we even be interested in what political science can bring to business if our future academic promotions do not depend on it? The answer for those desirous of maintaining a “real world” connection is found in Eckstein, “the separation of academic study and worldly activity is of quite recent origin” (1990, 54). Many political scientists believe that a separation of academe and “worldly activity” is unfounded; these are the scholars who gravitate to applied political science. Some of these applications proponents will see that a fertile unmet need exists for contributing expertise to the business community.

Meeting business needs does not mean bastardizing or compromising one’s scholarly principles, rather it ensures an audience, at least some of the time, for one’s research and energies expended—an audience that holds the power to apply what academics put down on paper. Meeting business needs cannot reflect the all too common attitude which states that “my research is done and applied users are free to use it—but caveat emptor—it may not be relevant to their needs for I have not designed it for that purpose.” Needless to say, for applied end-user interest, the research must be designed with them in mind.

To this point, only mention of research orientation has been made. However, let us not forget that many students who graduate with undergraduate majors in political science often end up in an MBA program after a cursory job search reveals that few employers outside of government value their political science expertise. Table 1 reveals two examples in which a noteworthy number of MBA students originated in the humanities and social sciences. While

school statistics are not broken down by major, political science is represented by the humanities and social science category. A surprising 48% of Harvard’s MBAs and 46% of the Wharton School’s MBAs come from humanities and social sciences.

The attitude of business that political scientists have little that meets its needs encompasses both research and the education of our majors. Most students quickly learn, as Andres and Beecher point out, that political scientists are not usually hired because of their political science background (Andres and Beecher 1989, 636). Yet, times are changing in our global village, and the opportunity has never been greater for political scientists, especially those skilled in international relations and area studies, to convince the business sector to make use of their skills. To do this we need to bridge the gap between theoretical and applied political science as Andres and Beecher note.

By comparison Andres and Beecher write that other disciplines

have done a better job of bridging the gap between the theoretical and the applied within their professions and in helping their members move back and forth between applied and theoretical settings without losing their sense of professional identity, connection, or esteem (Andres and Beecher 1989, 636).

To accomplish this task, Andres and Beecher suggest that political scientists start thinking of themselves as political scientists whether they remain in academe or venture into the corporate world. Bridging the gap presumably means not shunning

those who now practice their profession outside of academe, but rather maintaining contact with them in the form of professional interactions as well as in conferences. This is what we can do on our end to enhance the connection.

We must also remember the very basic fact that businesses are out to make a profit and to minimize risks in achieving that goal. With that in mind, we can proceed to give them what they need, that is, predictive research related to precise topic areas. This can be done in two ways. First, the researcher can publish in open sources and, second, he or she can channel research through commissioned requests, which are not usually for public consumption. The latter admittedly presents problems for peer review, yet holds the most value for corporations. Undoubtedly, a balance of both types of research is needed for the academic political scientist. In addition, recognition that commissioned reports can contribute to one’s professional growth is essential to sustaining the business-political science relationship.

In order to provide usable research to the business sector, researchers must be willing to stray from the theoretical axiom that there is “nothing wrong with being wrong” and that invalidated hypotheses in theoretical research do not cause harm (Eidlin 1988, 400). On the contrary, a fallacious hypothesis can cause great harm in the applied setting through the loss of profit, an investment, or even lives—as in the case of sending employees to unstable world areas. The applied political scientist must be willing to incur

TABLE 1
Undergraduate Majors for MBA Students at Two Universities

| Undergraduate Major | Wharton School (University of Pennsylvania) | Harvard |
|--------------------------------|---|---------|
| | % | % |
| Humanities and Social Sciences | 46 ^a | 48 |
| Business Administration | 21 | 19 |
| Engineering | 21 | 24 |
| Pure Science ^b | 8 | 9 |
| N/A | 4 | — |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

Sources: *The Wharton School MBA Catalog, 1990-91*; and *The Harvard University Catalog, 1990*.

^aEconomic majors are combined in humanities and social sciences.

^bThe Wharton School labels this category sciences & mathematics.

risk that normally is absent in academic circles.

What Do Businesses Want?

What businesses want from academics has been extensively researched by those in business schools, and data is readily available. However, data on what businesses actually want from political scientists is not readily available. Systematic data collection in this area should certainly be the object of future investigation. In this preliminary investigation, however, we will base our research upon observation, interviews, and interpretation of business school data that can be of promise to applied political science.

One of the better efforts at data collection concerning business's views on teaching and research was conducted by Ricks and Czinkota in 1979. These authors surveyed major international business executives, how they regard teaching and research, and how they rank several international business concerns. Their effort reveals that, while executives believe more research into international problems is needed, these same respondents also felt that existing academic articles were too theoretical.

In keeping with this low perception of academic research, it is not surprising that, when asked to list publications read, only six were listed more than once. These include *The Wall Street Journal*, *Business International*, *Business Week*, *Rundts*, *The Economist*, and *Fortune*. Respondents were regular readers of specialized publications, but no academic journals were mentioned at all (Ricks and Czinkota 1978). Such results attest to one fact, that while executives may not read scholarly political science journals, neither do they read scholarly business journals. It would seem that the problem of not meeting businesses' needs is therefore a general academic problem not necessarily confined to political science.

While academic helpfulness received a low ranking by respondents according to these researchers, their data do reveal that such international business executives rank "political uncertainty" sixth among

33 problem areas. This represents concrete evidence that international business executives do recognize the importance of political aspects of doing business overseas. It remains up to political scientists to bridge the gap, or demonstrate their expertise, in helping to answer the political queries posed by business.

Similar dissatisfaction with academe was recorded in a Canadian study of 122 senior managers who ranked regional studies as the least valuable international course. However, among CEOs who are responsible for long-term planning, regional studies was given more importance (Beamish and Calof 1989, 560).

It would seem that the problem of not meeting businesses' needs is therefore a general academic problem not necessarily confined to political science.

What we see here is value, albeit small, given to nonbusiness school courses such as regional studies. This represents one of the best indications that perhaps political scientists who are also area studies experts can indeed respond to business needs. Demand for area specialists well versed in a country's politics should increase particularly as investment in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and East Europe forces business to consider serious political obstacles that may jeopardize such efforts. CIS and East European business expansion may, indeed, serve as the perceptual catalyst for increased contributions by political scientists despite the fact that American business has invested overseas for many years.

At the 1991 Annual Meeting of the Council for International Business Risk Management, Leonard Schutzman, Vice President for Pepsico, addressed the issue "The Soviet Union: Chaos or Stability?" In his address he aptly noted the fine line between business success and political

obstacles. Pepsico's Russian Pizza Hut operation, for instance, accrued \$20 million in sales in its first year of operation. (Expenditures were not given.) Yet there is no doubt, according to Shutzman, that the Commonwealth is a difficult market wrought with chaos. Is it experiencing decentralization or disintegration? How do you engineer countertrade with the Republics and will they be able to bypass Moscow in the process? Such questions require political familiarity.

The lesson to be learned is clear—as political scientists we should recognize that circumstances are now optimal for increased interaction between area study political experts and business. Political risks that resulted from the 1973/74 oil crisis and the 1979 fall of the Shah of Iran merely sparked the business-political science relationship. The demise of the Eastern bloc gave it an air of permanence. The first step in this relationship begins with increased interaction between political science and schools of business.

In recent interviews with persons involved with international business, we found respondents gave rather similar answers. One of the most common responses was that political scientists must improve their predictive ability. Most felt that on-the-job training proved more useful than graduate school. This reflects the need for a better fit between the curriculum with which students are presented and their future place of employment.

To improve this fit, several suggestions were made. Barbara Samuels, deputy director for country risk policy at Chase Manhattan Bank, stressed the value of experience gained through internships. William Coplin, director of the public affairs program at Syracuse University and president of a business risk consulting firm, recognizes that business is skill-oriented and notes that business people appreciate the ability to solve problems. According to Coplin, political scientists should not merely transmit knowledge, but rather should teach skills. He placed emphasis both on curricular change and applied scholarly research. Students should be taught how to write a two-page position paper and required to conduct "real world projects" out-

side of the classroom.¹ In the research arena, Coplin shares a conviction that forecasting, not explanation, is the primary business need to which political scientists can contribute.

This emphasis on short, to the point, writing exercises was echoed throughout the interviews. One vital aspect is that business often works with incomplete information and sets short deadlines that must be adhered to by the researcher. Often academic studies are conducted over a long period of time, making their results become less useful to business. (Kovanda 1984, 36). Hence, if we agree that applied political science can contribute significantly to the needs of business, then, we, as scholars, must be willing to reformulate our methods and habits and teach our students to do so as well.

Crossing Disciplinary Lines: Political Science and Business

Collaborative effort between disciplines is not new. Lasswell wrote of such collaboration and saw its usefulness. He noted that “we could multiply the skill groups with which the political scientist of tomorrow will be intimately associated, both at the level of advanced training and professional performance” (Lasswell 1963, 206). His creative mind envisioned centers for advanced political science that would include professionals ranging from the hard sciences and engineering to psychology and business economists. What Lasswell calls “sharing experience” is essentially an interdisciplinary approach to political science. Lasswell’s ideas serve as inspiration to free ourselves from what he terms the “fractionalizing effect of modern specialization” (Ibid., 209). In this context, the link between political science and business makes perfect sense, and it seems natural that a working relationship can be developed between political science and area studies departments and schools of business.

Why should we look at this relationship since our research focuses upon giving the business sector, not business schools, what it needs? The answer is that the business school is a logical starting place for raising the

visibility, hence stature and utility, of political analysis among future business executives. Such an incremental approach, it is hoped, would help eliminate the common belief by many in the business sector that accurate political analysis can be done by anyone who reads the newspaper. This attitude must be overcome by demonstrating applications to business—applications that may involve complex methods and assessments that are not acquired through casual reading of the newspaper over a morning cup of coffee.

If we examine current trends in business school education, we find that the seed for increased contact between business disciplines and the social sciences already exists. One noticeable aspect of business schools today is the amount of ongoing curricular questioning related to the quest to augment student exposure to doing business internationally. This is due in large part to the 1974 changes initiated by the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). AACSB changed its accreditation standard to integrate an international dimension into the business curriculum (Nehrt 1987, 83).

As a corollary to this effort, business faculty increasingly recognize that students must be able to function in various environments in which *political*, legal, cultural, and institutional differences prevail (Aggarwal 1989, 7). Of interest to us as political scientists are proposals such as Aggarwal’s that include an option for students to take some international courses outside the school of business. Such courses may be required or simply recommended and might include “comparative or international courses” in the social sciences derived from *political science*, geography, anthropology, sociology, and psychology (Ibid., 6-7). Business schools might develop actual interdisciplinary courses that integrate various social science and humanities components including political science. A proposed model might look like Figure 1. While the political science component is entitled political risk/history, it could easily be modified depending on the specialized expertise at a given institution. Departments of political science must, however, clearly express a

desire to work closer with schools of business in order to facilitate their effort at internationalizing their curriculum.

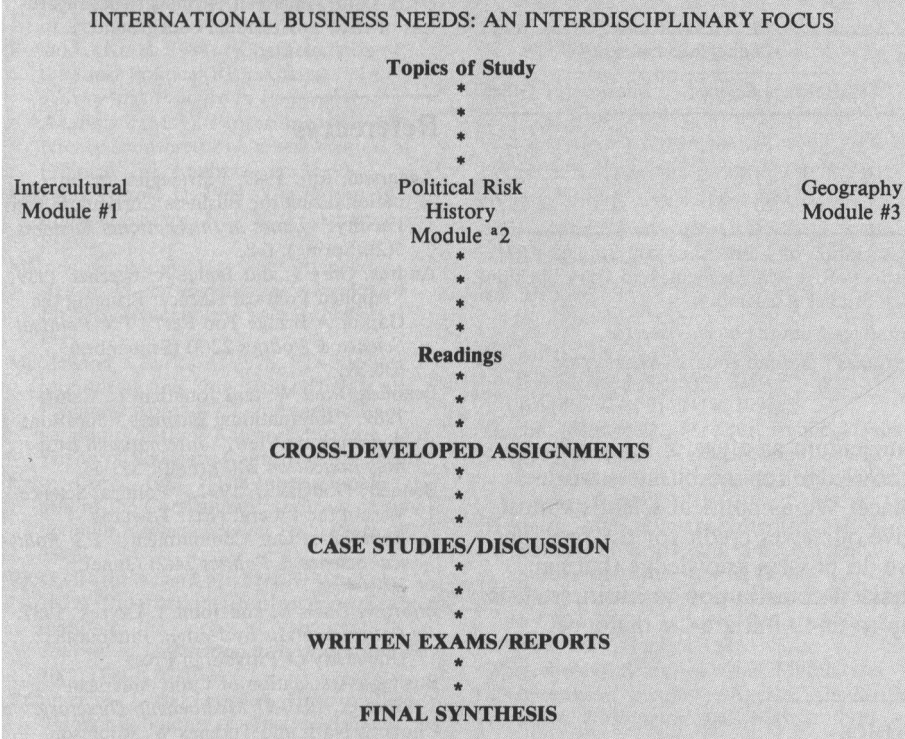
While we acknowledge the fact that political science departments and business schools stem from very different academic cultures, both suffer from a similar fate: their research is largely ignored by the business arena. The apparent underutilization of business school research by businesses could have a humbling effect and ultimately lead to increased interdisciplinary contacts. We must be quick to recognize, however, that the perception by business school academics of the utility of their research to businesses is grossly overestimated and that this inaccurate view of self will make the task of encouraging interdisciplinary contacts in curriculum and research an uphill battle. It would not be untoward for political scientists to take the first step and make use of all that is available to encourage such contacts. One place to start is the common academic ground of writing for grants that fund interdisciplinary projects that can be conducted by both business and political science faculty.

To facilitate the internationalization of the business school curriculum, for example, the U.S. Department of Education administers the “Business and International Education Program,” which offers grants to business schools that seek to enhance their international academic programs. This effort is also designed to encourage the development of area studies programs and “interdisciplinary international programs” (Federal Register 1984: 24363). A similar grant program designed to overcome barriers between business and liberal arts is co-sponsored by the AACSB and the Association of American Colleges.

In the research arena, interdisciplinary research is already occurring although at a slow pace.² Of interest to applied political science, however, would be the long-term examination of any increase in applied topics such as political risk.

A perusal of business school offerings at several of the nation’s leading institutions reveals that an interdisciplinary approach integrating political science into the field of study has

FIGURE 1
General Model for a Proposed Interdisciplinary Course



already taken hold. Among the universities offering joint MBA-MA degrees in business administration and international affairs are Columbia University and the University of Virginia.³ Perhaps one of the most innovative combinations of business and international politics is Georgetown University's International Business Diplomacy Program housed in its School of Foreign Service. Professors are drawn not only from academic circles, but from the public and private sectors as well and many hold degrees in political science (West 1991). This does not imply, however, that the trend is widely accepted throughout the United States (see Nehrt).

Political Risk Analysis— An Area for Political Science Contributions

One of the most fertile areas for applied political science contributions is in the area of political risk, sometimes called business or country risk. Political risk is defined in many ways, but essentially means "the political process that negatively affects foreign business" (see BERI's definition in Simon 1982, 63).

General political risk research can contribute to business needs as long as it directly relates to forward looking risk potential and examines political effects on business. For example, a forecast that President Menem of Argentina will not be around much longer may be of interest to academics, but for business this is not a sufficient statement. Business needs to know who will replace him as leader and what the consequences will be (Kouyoumdjian 1984, 11). The political scientist, on the other hand, tends traditionally to be more interested in the broader aspects of political change. Unfortunately, the broader the perspective, the less useful it will normally be to business. The "how does it relate to my business" syndrome may be derided by academics, but until researchers produce this type of work, little academic research will be read by business.

Once again, explanation that is past oriented is less valuable to business than are current and future assessments. Essentially, businesses are happiest with research that provides them with "an early warning system" for political risk (Simon, 68). Ironically, many political scien-

tists are leery of making the type of strong predictions so desired by business. In retrospect such predictions may appear rash to the academic community and, once again, peer review may figure among the political scientist's concerns.

Future Prospects for Increased Collaboration

As can be readily discerned by membership in professional organizations, political scientists do not gravitate to business associations in great numbers, and neither do business people join political science or area studies associations en masse.⁴

In fact, as Table 2 illustrates, political scientists only comprise 4% membership in the Business Association of Latin American Studies and 7% in the Council for International Business Risk Management. Yet, in the academically oriented Latin American Studies Association, political scientists make up 20% membership. Business truly has a poor showing with not more than 0.3% membership.

Joint sessions are now suggested for academic business annual meetings. In a plea to the Executive Board of the Academy of International Business (AIB), Dunning expressed his wish that the AIB "will actively encourage joint sessions with some of its sister associations, including those covering subjects outside the mainstream of business, e.g., . . . law and political science" (Dunning 1989, 431). Hegburg of Phillips Petroleum also proposes inviting representatives from business to participate in panel discussions—not *present papers*—at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (APSA). All of these suggestions are well taken and can lead to a greater understanding of what political science can contribute to business. Such interaction would set the stage for the two sides to iron out concerns each has about the other.

It would appear that we, as political scientists, are gradually coming to recognize interdisciplinary utility. Even the APSA-sponsored study, "The Political Science Major in the Liberal Arts Curriculum," undertaken by the Association of Ameri-

TABLE 2
Political Science and Business Membership in Select Professional Associations for 1990-91

| Association | Membership Category (%) | | |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| | Political Science | Business | Other |
| Business Association of Latin American Studies | 4 | 91 | 5 |
| Council for International Business Risk Management (formerly Association of Political Risk Analysts) | 7 | 93 ^a | n/a |
| Latin American Studies Association | 20 | 0.3 | 79.7 ^b |

Sources: 1990-91 Membership Directory, Business Association of Latin American Studies; 1991 Membership Directory, Council for International Business Risk Management; and Gary Sheldon, Editor, Membership Directory for the Latin American Studies Association.

^aThis category includes business faculty and representatives from the business sector.

^bIncludes those categorized under "Latin American studies" and the undeclared category.

can Colleges, called for paying more attention to "connections to other fields" and even suggested inviting economists, sociologists, and biologists to address the APSA and "set challenges" for us (Bennett 1991, 203). While they did not explicitly mention business faculty or members of the business sector, the leap can easily be made to invite them as well.

Increased contact especially on one's own turf (i.e., annual professional meetings) can lead to better understanding of what the "other side" wants and, in turn, can ultimately lead to applied research that is truly consumable by non-academics.

Political scientists must first get "closer to business" in order to understand their needs. Second, they must "know enough about the other guy's business to make a difference" and, lastly, they must evaluate the right kinds of issues (Bruce 1991). As a final comment, applied researchers must also be thick skinned enough to deflect allegations of unscholarly research hurled by unsympathetic academic peers.

Academic contribution could be greater if our academics develop a research style that answers basic business questions such as: Will the research findings help me minimize my risks? or, Is this investment worth the costs incurred? Clearly, esoteric research has little value to the business sector (Howell 1986). This is a fact of reality that must be recognized from the outset.

To improve business's regard for political science, there must not only be more applied research, but also a willingness to present political science

curriculum as a useful body of knowledge for the business workplace. We as political scientists must give ourselves credit for the fact that we do possess knowledge that can make a contribution to business. It is up to us to initiate the dialogue.

Notes

*This paper was prepared for presentation at the 1991 annual meeting of APSA in Washington, D.C.

1. In a similar vein, Richard D. Teach, Professor of Management at Georgia Institute of Technology, used a collaborative approach successfully when he had students write a business plan for the Atlanta International Olympic Committee. As a positive sidelight, following, Atlanta was awarded the 1996 Summer Olympics.

2. We do not wish to imply that no applied political science contribution to business research has been made. That would be incorrect for, in fact, there are several important contributions particularly in the field of political risk analysis. They include: Nazli Choucri and Thomas W. Robinson, eds., *Forecasting in International Relations: Theory, Methods, Problems, Prospects* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1978); Stephen J. Kobrin, John Bask, Stephen Blank and Joseph La Palombara, "The Assessment and Evaluation of Non-economic Environments by American Firms: A Preliminary Report," *Journal of International Business Studies*, Spring-Summer 1980; Charles A. McClelland, "D-Files for Monitoring and Forecasting Threats and Problems Abroad" (Los Angeles: International Relations Research Institute, University of Southern California, January 1978); and R. J. Rummel and David A. Heenan, "How Multinationals Analyze Political Risk," *Harvard Business Review*, January-February 1978.

3. We refer the reader to the various course catalogs for a more detailed explanation of course offerings.

4. We chose associations which would be of interest to political science and business

faculty, and the business sector. The Business Association of Latin American Studies, for example, attracts persons with a shared interest in Latin American business issues regardless of their professional background.

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Academics to Ideologues: A Brief History of the Public Policy Research Industry

James G. McGann, *Temple University*

Public policy research institutes are a twentieth-century phenomenon and in many ways unique to the United States. Rooted in the social sciences and supported by private individuals and foundations, think tanks began to appear around 1900 as a part of a larger effort to bring the expertise of scholars and managers to bear on the economic and social problems of this period (Smith 1991).¹ According to Patricia Linden, "The early versions [of think tanks], set up by private capital long before the proliferation of tax-funded social agencies, were organized to alleviate problems of the poor. Two survivors of that era are the National Conference on Social Welfare, formed in 1873, and the Russell Sage Foundation, established in 1907 to help provide housing and better conditions for the

elderly, orphaned and indigent" (Linden 1987). Linden does not state what the connection is between these institutions and the evolution of think tanks, but one can surmise that it has to do with the fact that they were independent institutions that were engaged in developing policies and programs to alleviate human suffering.

I prefer to trace the origins of these institutions to the Brookings Institution, which was established in 1916, because Brookings was the first independent organization dedicated exclusively to conducting public policy research. Using this as a starting point, one can divide the history of the public policy research industry into four time periods that spawned many of the think tanks that exist today: 1900-29, 1930-59, 1960-75,

and 1976-90. Table 1 summarizes the number of institutes that were established during these periods and that have remained in operation.

Each one of the four periods was marked by a major domestic or international upheaval that sparked the creation of a new generation of public policy research institutes. These major events were wars of one kind or another: World War I,

TABLE 1
Public Policy Research Institutes
(by Period Founded)

| Period | Number Founded |
|-----------|----------------|
| 1900-1929 | 10 |
| 1930-1959 | 17 |
| 1960-1975 | 30 |
| 1976-1990 | 55 |