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## *Elite integration in stable democracies: a reconsideration\**

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**ABSTRACT** Efforts to reconceptualize elite structure and functioning in stable democracies, together with data from surveys of elite interaction networks in three democratic societies, suggest that the conventional power elite, ruling class and pluralist perspectives are only partly accurate and that fusing them in a more realistic model makes much sense. Using data from comparable surveys of national elites in the US, Australia and West Germany, we argue that the configurations of elite circles in these societies reveal tight integration, as in the power elite and ruling class models, together with representation of numerous, diverse groups, as in the pluralist model. We find comprehensive integration in each of the three national elites, with a funnel-like structure of communication networks that is inclusive of all sectors and heterogeneous in the social origins, attitudes and party affiliations of the several hundred most centrally located persons. We contend that an informal interaction structure providing all major elite groups access to decisionmaking is a precondition of any stable democracy.

### ELITE INTEGRATION IN STABLE DEMOCRACIES: A RECONSIDERATION

The extent and shape of elite integration in stable democracies are among the most persistent and controversial issues in political analysis. Research from the pluralist perspective typically finds elite fragmentation, with a shifting, roughly balanced power structure overall (e.g. Dahl, 1961; Polsby, 1980). By contrast, analyses in the power elite tradition (Mills, 1956) find considerable elite integration manifested by cohesive nationwide interaction networks. Similarly, class analyses taking an instrumentalist as opposed to a structuralist position (e.g. Miliband, 1969; Whitt, 1982; Domhoff, 1983), though disagreeing with the

power elite perspective on certain aspects of the structure and bases of power in capitalist societies, generally agree that elites in these societies are tightly integrated.

In rethinking issues of elite structure, a number of scholars have partly but importantly shifted the focus from fragmented balance or cohesive hegemony to 'consensual unity' arguing that in stable democracies all important elite groups participate in decisionmaking and agree about informal rules of the game and the worth of existing political institutions (Lijphart, 1969; Field and Higley, 1973, 1980, 1985; Di Palma, 1973; Prewitt and Stone, 1973; Putnam, 1976). Dovetailing with this general contention, but logically separable from the focus on consensual

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unity, is the claim that several stable democracies originated in 'elite settlements' or 'elite pacts' in which warring elite factions compromised their most basic disputes and established informal networks that secured each other's vital interests, thus laying the basis for political stability and an evolution towards democracy (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Burton and Higley, 1987a). Converging with both these contentions is Giovanni Sartori's new 'decision-making theory of democracy', which explains how 'a multiplicity of criss-crossing power groups engaged in coalitional maneuvering' nevertheless perceive decisional outcomes as positive-sum and thereby support democracy (Sartori, 1987: 147ff).

These reconceptualizations of elite structure and functioning in stable democracies imply that elites constitute a 'single national power establishment' (Kadushin, 1979) to an extent that is not adequately recognized in the ruling class, power elite and pluralist perspectives, but that is not fundamentally incompatible with them either: national elites are tightly integrated, as in the power elite and class perspectives; at the same time, however, the different elite groups represent sufficiently heterogeneous interests to provide competition among different points of view, as in the pluralist perspective. This image of comprehensive elite integration accords with data on the interaction patterns of national elites in at least three contemporary democracies: the United States, Australia, and West Germany. In this article, we argue that the configurations of *elite circles* in these democracies reveal the ways in which the three familiar perspectives intersect and show why they should be fused in a new and more realistic model.

We begin with a brief discussion of elite integration and elite circles in stable democracies. Next, we summarize techniques for studying elite circles. Then we examine data on the circle configurations of American, Australian, and West German national elites in recent years. Finally, we summarize our findings, underscore the strengths and limitations of our data, and draw conclusions on elite integration in stable democracies.

#### ELITE INTEGRATION AND ELITE CIRCLES

Our general contention is that an interaction structure which provides all important elites with access to central decisionmaking arenas is a precondition of any stable democracy. By elites we mean persons who hold authoritative positions in powerful public and private organizations and influential movements, and who are therefore able to affect strategic decisions regularly (see Burton and Higley, 1987b). If one notes that the pursuit of particularistic interests by elites has routinely led in history to endemic political instability and to numerous autocratic or short-lived democratic regimes (Higley and Burton, 1989), it follows that elites engage in the non-violent, cooperative interactions that are essential for stable democracy only when they believe it is to their mutual benefit (Higley, Field and Groholt, 1976: 59-91). This implies that an interaction structure which enables all important elites to hold and exercise what they regard as more or less satisfactory amounts of influence on decisions of importance to themselves or their organizations underlies any stable democratic order.<sup>1</sup> In short, it is plausible to think that elites in stable democracies engage in power sharing and power competition through a complex but little understood network structure that is a precondition of such democracies.

As with all political theory, ours has ample precedent. Pareto (1935) long ago contended that the elites of 'pluto-democracies', by which he meant the bourgeois and working-class leaders who jointly control political decisionmaking in industrialized societies, form a web in which all important centers of influence and patronage are connected. Though these centers are forever quarrelling and competing with one another, their integration is nevertheless sufficient to warrant thinking of them as a single entity: 'It is an order or system of a vast number of mutually dependent hubs of influence and patronage, which keeps together by the fact that each such hub is dependent to some extent on the good graces of another such hub' (Finer, 1966: 67; see also Finer, 1968).

With his new 'decision-making theory of democracy', Giovanni Sartori (1987: 214-53) extends and helps concretize this line of

reasoning. Sartori theorizes that a stable democracy is possible only if the groups that are most central to its operation perceive decisional outcomes as positive-sum rather than zero-sum. 'Committee' structures—the numerous, small, face-to-face groups of mainly elite actors that persist over time—handle continuous flows of decisions and avoid winner-take-all, majority rule decisionmaking. As relatively invisible entities, committees are the 'real stuff' of politics—the places in which issues are examined, discussed, drafted, and for the most part decided (Sartori, 1987: 228). They function according to the principle of 'deferred reciprocal compensation' whereby committee members who feel less intensely about one issue will go along with a decision which they do not particularly like because they expect to get their way on another issue that is vital to them (Sartori, 1987: 229). This inclines members to view the totality of committee decisions, few of which are ever taken by 'showdown' majority votes, as positive-sum. Further, each committee exists in a web of other committees, all of which interact and coordinate more or less spontaneously on the basis of concessions or 'side payments' that they make to each other. Finally, all this is compatible with democracy to the extent that popularly-elected or otherwise accountable and responsive political leaders hold strategic positions in the committee structure, representing and registering public desires and grievances (Sartori, 1987: 229–35).

Primarily concerned with the workings of explicitly governmental committees, Sartori's insightful scheme can be extended to the larger interaction structure of national elites *tout court*. By substituting the concept of elite circles for committees, we postulate that in stable democracies a relatively tight and at the same time comprehensive integration of national elites permits their members access to decisionmaking and fosters a common perception of mutual interdependence.

Thus, national elites can be thought of as operating through intricate systems of discrete, informal, flexible, but still significantly cohesive influence circles that form around and across issues and institutions. Though they encompass friendships and other personal ties, elite circles

do not rest primarily on affect. Rather, they are based on repeated interactions among elite persons who have common policy interests or policy problems to solve. Analytically, these circles are the dense parts of much larger networks of elite contacts and connections. But unlike cliques, committees, and other small bodies which are their constituent parts, elite circles, and even more so the overall elite network, also involve interactions at a distance.

Involving repeated but mainly informal and often indirect interactions on common policy issues and purposes, elite influence circles achieve a significant amount of integration without, however, having a designated or permanent set of leaders. One reason is that the members of an elite circle usually do not know its entire shape and composition. They know the members of the circle with whom they regularly interact, of course, but they are only dimly aware of the circle's wider membership.

Our theoretical model is not oblivious to inter-personal differences in influence, however, nor does it imply that elite circles are egalitarian structures. First, access to central decision-making arenas is not open to everyone. It presupposes that individuals control power resources or have a reputation for being an expert on the subject matter at hand. Secondly, organizational power resources play an important role in decisionmaking. Although members of decisionmaking committees usually try to reach compromises acceptable to everyone involved, their perceptions of what constitutes a 'fair' compromise depend at least partly on the tacit acceptance of power differentials among the different participants. A final differentiation derives from the strategic positions of individuals in elite circles. Some of their members are more pivotal in the sense that they are more closely connected to large numbers of other circle members, to other important circles, and to other similarly pivotal persons. On the other hand, the multi-dimensional nature of power and influence resources in a modern society precludes that the various power and influence resources are amenable to a simple rank order and is not compatible with a one-dimensional conceptualization of power and influence.

Given these features of elite power and influence circles, it is plausible to think that they constitute the principal means by which national elites broker their diverse and frequently opposing individual and organizational interests in a modern society. What is at issue, however, is not the existence and importance of elite circles *per se*, but the particular configurations of such circles in stable democracies, for the thrust of our argument is that it is primarily through the informal, flexible, and far-flung interactions which circles permit that elites obtain the mutual access to decisionmaking that is a precondition of stable democracies. Following Sartori's lead, we therefore hypothesize that any stable democracy contains multiple elite circles which overlap each other, which cut across societal sectors, institutional boundaries, and issue arenas, which exist in 'continuous decisional contexts', and which, like Sartori's face-to-face committees, function according to the operational code of *do ut des* (Kadushin, 1981; Sartori, 1987: 228).

But we go one step further than Sartori because we are interested in precisely how the multiple elite circles are themselves finally integrated to facilitate a stable democracy. The answer to this question appears to lie in the existence of a large, overarching elite central circle which links or meshes most other circles and which is the capstone of elite integration in stable democracies. Composed of persons who belong to more specialized circles and who typically are active on several issues or in several decisionmaking arenas simultaneously, this central circle serves as a clearing house for national elite functioning, helping to sift and prioritize decisions, and constituting a key communications structure for arranging and aggregating the trade-offs, compromises, and informal understandings without which a large and diversified national elite would quickly break apart into intransigent and warring factions.

#### METHODS AND DATA

In the analysis which follows, we investigate the configurations of elite power and influence circles in the US, Australia, and West Germany,

and we show the existence of a large elite central circle in each country. Because these central circles are the most novel aspect of our findings, and because of their importance for the overall extent and shape of elite integration, we concentrate on their compositions, internal structures, and social characteristics. It is necessary to begin, however, with a brief discussion of the analytical techniques and data we use in this investigation.

One reason for the inconclusive nature of the debate over elite structure in stable democracies is normative: it has hinged on conflicting images of the 'good society'. But another reason is methodological, involving disputes over how best to study the structure and functioning of national elite or power structures. Systematic research is difficult because these structures are not readily accessible to observation and the content of ties is sometimes secret. Several approaches have been used, each with shortcomings. One is to study elite structures by looking at outcomes, asking who prevails on important decisions (e.g. Dahl, 1961) or who has the most money or other scarce resources (e.g. Domhoff, 1983). But the analysis of outcomes has been criticized for focusing only on issues involving overt conflict and on the final stage of decision processes (e.g. Bachrach and Baratz, 1963; Lukes, 1974). Likewise, studying the possession of valued resources focuses exclusively on readily measurable resources such as capital.

A second approach, common in the past two decades, analyzes overlapping corporate directorships (e.g. Allen, 1974; Mizuchi, 1982; Useem, 1984; Mintz and Schwartz, 1985; Stokman, Ziegler and Scott, 1985). This research yields intriguing maps of ties between corporate boards of directors but is incomplete as an analysis of power both because it focuses only on economic institutions and because the content of ties as well as their impact are usually unknown.

A third approach examines issue-based organizational networks within policy domains as a way of understanding structures of power (Laumann and Knoke, 1987). This overcomes some of the problems in corporate overlap studies because it relates organizational network

structures to both issue preferences and decisional outcomes. The focus on specific issues, however, limits its usefulness for gaining a general picture of politics at the top in the same way that the decisionmaking studies of how certain laws or regulations came to be passed have historical but not necessarily general validity. An accumulation of issue-based studies may hold out the greatest promise for an understanding of elite structures, but this promise may yet be dashed on the rocks of elite secrecy and considerations about legitimate research techniques noted above. In any case, we do not now have this accumulation.

A fourth approach to studying power structures attempts a global mapping of generalized relations between elites. This avoids some of the problems of other approaches since it is not restricted to one sector or policy domain. Like corporate overlap studies, a global mapping lacks information on the content of ties. But by providing a 'bird's-eye view' of elite structure as manifested in the interaction patterns among numerous powerful groups dealing with scores of policy issues and many issue domains, it allows assessment of degrees of integration or fragmentation overall. For this reason and because it is consistent with our circle model of elite structure, we have adopted the global mapping approach in our research.

Our data are taken from comparable surveys of national elites in the United States in 1971-72, Australia in 1975, and West Germany in 1981. Designed to study elites in institutional sectors with broad impact on national policy-making and political processes, each survey involved interviews with several hundred occupants of key decisionmaking positions in major public and private sectors. Consistent with our theoretical orientation, the interviews gathered data on policy activities, attitudes, involvement in elite communication networks, and social backgrounds. There were 545 respondents in the American survey, 370 in the Australian, and 497 in the West German.<sup>2</sup>

Sample design began with the identification of key organizations in national policy-making. The top position-holders in each institutional sector were sampled: politics, civil service, business, trade unions, mass media, voluntary

associations, and the academic sphere. The organizations and positions identified were similar, but not identical, in the three surveys. For example, in politics leading members of Parliament/Congress, top party officials, cabinet ministers/secretaries, and other key federal and state leaders were sampled. Likewise, in business the chief executive officers and board chairmen of the largest industrial and non-industrial corporations and financial institutions were in each sample. The sectors, organizations, and positions are described more fully in Appendix A. It is important to note that in each survey the positional sample was supplemented by a snowball sample in which persons who were not in the original sample were interviewed if they were mentioned as key actors by three or more respondents.<sup>3</sup>

Each respondent was asked to name the one national issue on which he or she had most actively attempted to influence national policy or public opinion during the preceding twelve months. A wide variety of issues was named in each country. Respondents were questioned extensively about their assessments of and activities on the issue they named. Included were a series of sociometric questions asking the names of the persons with whom they interacted over this issue. Each interaction generated by these questions can be seen as a policy-related communication link.

Our network data thus consists of contacts between respondents and the persons they named in answer to the sociometric questions. Because selective memory tends to reveal the 'deep structure' of social networks by blanking out less relevant partners while recalling the more important ones (Freeman, Romney and Freeman, 1987), it is reasonable to assume that our data are not merely an ephemeral collection of names. But it is important to understand the limitations of our procedure. These data are an attempt to develop the traces of any system of circles and 'committees' that might exist. Yet the particular contacts reported must not be reified. First, the contacts reported by respondents were hardly the only contacts among elites in the three societies at the time of the surveys because respondents were limited to reporting their interaction partners on only one issue, even

though they presumably were active on several issues simultaneously. Thus our data grossly underestimate the actual density of policy-related contacts among elites in the three societies. Should these data reveal an integrated interaction structure, one can safely assume not only that such a structure existed, but that it was actually much more dense than our data indicate. Second, the contacts that are reported are those the respondent felt to be in pursuit of legitimate attempts to influence policy. Elite studies conducted by social scientists can never hope to uncover the truly illegitimate.<sup>4</sup> Third, our data are not sufficiently detailed or accurate to distinguish who initiated a contact. For this and another reason to be explained shortly, we must assume that if A talked to B, B talked to A and thus the networks we analyze are non-directional.<sup>5</sup>

Our analytic procedures are intended not to test the likelihood of a particular connection existing or not existing, nor to gain an estimate of the true density of interaction but rather, consistent with our theory, to recover the overall patterning of interactions. The aim is to test the likelihood that (1) there are various circles and 'committees' and (2) to gain some estimate of the degree to which they overlap.

Network theory customarily distinguishes two models for analyzing data on interaction patterns: the model of social cohesion and the model of structural equivalence (Burt, 1987; Laumann and Knoke, 1987). The former searches within a large network for denser parts or areas that are characterized by high cohesion. The latter identifies sets of persons with similar patterns of connections to others. Since we are interested in the extent of integration of national elite communication networks, the cohesion model is clearly more appropriate for our analysis. It offers two strategies for determining the relative locations of individuals in a network: (1) identifying those who make up the more cohesive parts of the network, and (2) measuring the relative centrality of each network member. In the analysis which follows, we employ both strategies to examine the American, Australian, and West German national elite networks.

## RESULTS

### *The Central Circles*

A procedure developed by Alba (1972, 1973; Alba and Guttman, 1972) identifies the more cohesive parts of networks. Cliques consisting of three or more persons all of whom interact on a face-to-face basis are the basic building blocks. But because a national elite in a large and complex society cannot possibly be connected through face-to-face interactions alone, indirect contacts through intermediaries must also be studied, provided that they involve only one or a few intermediaries. Studying such indirect contacts is consistent with Granovetter's well-known thesis about the 'strength of weak ties' (1973). A key question is the extent to which direct and indirect contacts combine to form elite circles (Kadushin, 1968, 1979).

Concretely, our analysis begins with the matrix of links formed by all contacts reported by respondents. This matrix includes respondents as well as non-respondents who were named by two or more respondents and thus constitute a link between those who named them. The inclusion of non-respondents is crucial for two reasons. First, it is not possible to interview all the persons in a national elite, so that the matrix of contact partners is necessarily incomplete. But second and more importantly, the universe of persons actively trying to influence national policies almost certainly differs from the universe of positionally-defined elites. The former universe is unknown to the researcher at the beginning of a study because it may include influential persons who no longer hold formal elite positions at the time of the study (e.g. 'elder statesmen') as well as persons who are important even though they have not yet reached elite positions ('high fliers'), plus others whose influence primarily rests on personal attributes rather than the formal power resources associated with positions in important organizations. By including non-respondents in the matrix, and by interviewing persons not in the original sample who are frequently named by sample members (i.e. snowball sampling), these problems in elite research are at least partly overcome. This inclusion of persons named but not interviewed is an additional reason for not assuming directionality in

reported interactions, since the persons not interviewed cannot report on their view of who initiated the interaction. In sum, the first step in our analysis involves reducing the matrix of all reported contacts to a network of persons, all of whom are interconnected directly or through intermediaries.

This procedure identified connected networks of roughly 800 persons in each of the national elites studied: 876 in the US, 746 in Australia, and 799 in West Germany. The density of each network is similar and relatively low: the interpersonal ties respondents reported amount to about 1 per cent of all possible ties among network members. However, each of the networks contains a sizable number of cohesive cliques and circles: 32 in the American network, 22 in West Germany, and 11 in Australia. In each country, the majority of these cliques and circles are small, seldom numbering more than a handful of persons. But in each national elite network there is also a large, relatively inclusive circle composed of several hundred persons. This 'central circle' contains 227 persons in the US, 340 in West Germany, and 418 in Australia. The density of each circle is roughly three times that of the national elite network: 3.8 per cent in the US, 2.6 per cent in Australia, and 2.7 per cent in West Germany. Thus central circle members can contact each other more readily than the typical member of the larger network can contact other network members.

#### *Network Centrality*

Centrality is another widely used network analytic procedure with an emphasis different from that of clique and circle detection. It

TABLE 1 *Characteristics of the American (USA), Australian (AUS) and West German (FRG) elite networks*

	USA	AUS	FRG
Sample members (n)	545	370	497
Network members (n)	876	746	799
Network density (%)	0.7	1.1	0.9
Cliques (n)	442	1132	739
Circles (n)	32	11	22
Central circle members (n)	227	418	340
Central circle density (%)	3.8	2.6	2.7

denotes, in essence, the number of communication paths which pass through an individual's network location (Freeman, 1977). Thus a highly central individual need not be a member of cohesive cliques and circles since a high centrality score can be achieved through connections to persons who are not themselves connected. Many measures of network centrality have been developed (e.g. Freeman, 1977; Knoke and Burt, 1983; Bonacich, 1987), though they are all highly intercorrelated (Bolland, 1988). A 'reachability' measure based on the number of persons each network member could reach within two steps (i.e. through one intermediary) was calculated for each network member. Persons highly central by this measure could therefore easily communicate with a large number of other elites. Less central persons would have to spend more time and effort to reach many others.

This centrality measure allows us to study the core of each national elite by focusing on the 100 individuals who could reach the largest numbers of others either directly or through single intermediaries. It is worth noting that the most central American could reach 389 other persons in the elite network in this way, his Australian counterpart could reach 462 others, and the most central West German could reach 436 others. By contrast, the least central person in each national elite network could reach only half a dozen others directly or through single intermediaries. While these centrality scores are calculated for the full networks and are determined by a method different from that by which the central circles are identified, virtually all of the 100 most central persons in each network are also members of the central circle. To this extent, these 100 most central persons can be thought of as forming the core of each central circle.<sup>6</sup>

#### *Composition of the Central Circles and Circle Cores*

Consistent with the thesis of relatively comprehensive integration of national elites in stable democracies, representatives of all important institutional sectors belong to the elite networks and central circles in each country. Table 2 shows the sector composition of the



TABLE 2 *Sector composition of the sample, network, central circle and core in the American (USA), Australian and West German (FRG) elite studies (%)*

Sector	USA				Australia				FRG			
	Sample	Network	Circle	Core	Sample	Network	Circle	Core	Sample	Network	Circle	Core
Politics	33.0	52.1	50.2	71.0	21.6	28.3	27.2	25.0	27.8	34.2	37.6	38.0
Civil Service	9.9	8.2	5.7	1.0	13.5	17.7	18.4	19.0	11.9	12.4	9.4	5.0
Business	24.2	13.5	16.3	9.0	24.3	17.3	20.8	37.0	29.2	23.9	25.0	27.0
Labor Unions	8.8	6.1	7.0	4.0	13.5	8.9	8.9	4.0	4.6	6.9	9.7	10.0
Media	11.6	8.1	7.5	2.0	10.8	8.1	8.1	6.0	12.1	10.0	10.0	14.0
Vol. Assoc.	9.5	6.5	4.4	6.0	10.8	6.9	4.8	5.0	2.8	2.4	1.8	2.0
Academic	2.9	4.0	7.5	7.0	5.4	10.3	9.8	4.0	6.8	6.5	5.6	4.0
Other	0.0	1.5	1.3	0.0	0.0	2.5	1.9	0.0	4.8	3.8	0.9	0.0
(n)	(545)	(876)	(227)	(100)	(370)	(746)	(418)	(100)	(497)	(799)	(340)	(100)

original elite sample, the network, the central circle, and the circle core in each country. We interpret the presence of representatives from all sectors in the central circles and their cores as evidence of relatively comprehensive elite integration.

All sectors, however, are not equally represented in the central circles. The prevalence of political leaders and government officials in the central circles is a striking similarity in the three national elites. Roughly half of each central circle consists of political and civil service elites. While this pattern is most pronounced in the US, it is clear in Australia and West Germany as well.<sup>7</sup>

Lacking direct data on the influence of different sectors in the central circles, we use as a rough estimate of sectoral over- and under-representation a comparison of a sector's proportions in the original sample and in the central circle. On the assumption that sample members, in contrast to non-respondents, had equal opportunities to name others, and thus to be members of the central circle, a sector is over-represented if its members are more numerous in the circle than in the sample. As already noted, politicians are over-represented in all three central circles, while civil servants are over-represented only in Australia. Conversely, business elites are numerically under-represented in all three central circles, while trade union leaders are over-represented only in the German circle.<sup>8</sup> Media elites are under-represented in all three circles, which is consistent with the claims of some media

respondents that they are observers of, not active participants in, policy-making. Similarly, leaders of voluntary associations are weakly represented in all three central circles. By contrast, academics play a more important role.

Conspicuous by their absence in the central circles are military and cultural elites (e.g. religious leaders, intellectuals, artists, entertainment celebrities). Some of these elites were not in the positional samples, and to that extent they had a lower probability of entering the central circles. But this is only part of the explanation for their absence. First, the snowball sampling procedure brings in important elites who were not part of the positional sample. Secondly, the openness of the network analytic procedure allows for the inclusion of non-respondents, and, indeed, quite a few non-respondents ended up in the central circles: 63 in the American, 143 in the Australian, and 110 in the West German. Consequently, well-connected members of the military and cultural elites could have found places in the central circles even though they were not interviewed. In any event, military leaders were included in the West German sample, and top-ranking religious leaders were included in both the West German and Australian samples. But even then, no West German military commander belonged to the central circle, and neither did any religious leader in West Germany or Australia. As regards intellectuals, artists, and entertainment figures, a study of the American intellectual elite in the early 1970s found few connections

between its members and other elites (Kadushin, 1974), while a study of the Yugoslav national elite, which included academic and cultural elites as one of its sampled sectors, also showed few connections between them and the other elites (Barton, Denitch and Kadushin, 1973).

Table 2 also shows the sector composition of the central circle core in each country—the 100 persons who could reach the largest numbers of other persons either directly or through single intermediaries. As is true for the central circles, the circle cores contain representatives from all elite sectors. In the US, political-governmental leaders comprise nearly three-quarters of the circle core, suggesting their utter centrality in the national elite. In Australia and West Germany, political-governmental leaders also dominate the cores, though not to the same extent. In Australia, the business elite is strongly over-represented in the core which suggests that political-governmental and business leaders form a tightly interconnected and somewhat exclusive 'power elite' formation in that country. However, in contrast to assumptions of power elite theorists, the political-governmental leaders in this formation are associated in more or less equal numbers with parties sympathetic to and those somewhat hostile towards business interests. In West Germany, the circle core is more diverse. Political-governmental leaders comprise 43 per cent of the core, but in contrast to Australia, business leaders are somewhat under-represented, while trade union and media leaders are somewhat over-represented, with other elites showing up in proportions that parallel their memberships in the central circle.

#### *Social and Positional Correlates of Circle and Core Membership*

Numerous studies have found that occupants of national elite positions are distinguished by their privileged social origins, higher education, and greater age (see Putnam, 1976 for a summary of this research). Our data are consistent with these findings: In the US, West Germany, and Australia, only a small proportion of elites have working-class origins, the bulk of them have university educations, and their average age is in the early fifties (Higley, Deacon and Smart,

1979; Moore, 1979; Hoffmann-Lange, 1985). As one would expect, the major exception to these general patterns is the trade union elites: they much more often come from working-class backgrounds and less often hold university degrees.

Putting the trade union elites to one side, do elite persons with privileged backgrounds more frequently end up in the most central network locations as has been found for business elites in the 'inner circle' (Useem, 1984: 66–70)? It appears that they do not. Table 3 shows that social class origins,<sup>9</sup> measured by whether a respondent's father was a member of the working class, play little, if any, role in determining where a person is situated in the national elite network. In West Germany and Australia there is the hint of a slight disadvantage for political leaders from working-class backgrounds in reaching the central circle cores (even though both countries had left-of-center, trade union-linked governments at the time of the surveys), but overall, the three networks do not appear to be structured internally in any strong way by the class origins of their members. These results suggest that while upper-class origins remain advantageous for achieving membership in the elite (Putnam, 1976: 21–44), their importance fades once membership has been achieved.

Far more important for the locations of individuals in the elite circles and cores are their formal organizational positions as well as their policy-making activities and visibility associated with these formal positions. In all three countries, centrality in the elite network results to a large extent from holding the most senior positions in important institutions and

TABLE 3 *Father working class for sample, central circle and core according to sector type for American (USA), Australian (AUS) and West German (FRG) elites (%)*

	Political sectors			Other sectors		
	USA	AUS	FRG	USA	AUS	FRG
Sample	9.4	25.8	30.9	18.8	11.6	20.5
Central circle	11.4	27.1	24.6	16.7	11.5	25.7
Core	15.2	12.9	11.1	13.0	12.9	28.3

organizations. For example, in Australia three-quarters of all federal cabinet ministers belong to the central circle, while only 18 per cent of their back-bench colleagues in federal Parliament are in the circle. In West Germany all core members hold senior organizational positions; these include, for example, 7 of the 17 members of the federal cabinet and 7 of the 11 state prime ministers.

Similarly, an analysis of publicly visible policy-making activities, such as testifying before parliamentary or congressional committees, participating on government advisory committees, giving issue-related speeches, writing articles advocating policies, and the like, shows that central circle members in all three countries are much more heavily involved in such activities than are those outside the central circles (Moore, 1979; Higley and Moore, 1981).

#### *Political Correlates of Central Circle and Core Membership*

Evidence presented so far shows that elite central circles and their cores are inclusive in terms of sector composition and composed primarily of the most senior and active formal position-holders. We now ask whether central circles and cores are similarly inclusive in terms of explicitly political affiliations and attitudes. Table 4 shows the political party preferences of American, Australian, and West German respondents according to their network and sector

TABLE 4 *Party preference for sample, central circle and core according to sector type for American (USA), Australian and West German (FRG) elites (%)*

	Sample	Circle	Core
<i>USA: % Republican</i>			
Political sectors	51.4	49.3	55.3
Other sectors	40.5	34.1	34.8
<i>Australia: % Labor</i>			
Political sectors	37.7	42.1	58.3
Other sectors	13.3	13.0	7.1
<i>FRG: % SPD/FDP</i>			
Political sectors	63.8	70.3	76.2
Other sectors	37.9	37.8	33.2

locations. The proportions of respondents preferring the party in power at the time of each survey are given: in the US, the Republican Party is listed because it controlled the executive branch of government, even though Congress was controlled by the Democrats in 1971–72; in Australia the Labor Party is listed because it controlled the federal government during most of 1975; and in West Germany the Social Democrat–Free Democrat coalition is listed because it controlled a majority of votes in federal parliament in 1981.

Despite the Republican Party's ascendancy in the US, membership in that party was no more common for politicians in the sample than for those in the central circle core, and it was a little less common among core members from other sectors than for persons outside the core in those sectors. In Australia, Labor Party politicians were more numerous in the circle core than in the original sample, but outside of the political elite Labor Party affiliation was not correlated with centrality. Similarly, in West Germany politicians affiliated with the SPD/FDP governing coalition comprised a larger proportion of the circle core than they did of the original sample, though, as in Australia, affiliation with the dominant party or parties was not correlated with centrality elsewhere in the elite network. These patterns suggest that the formal system of government does affect elite networks, a point we will return to later.

What about issue attitudes? Do these correlate with centrality? Because they generate sharp cleavages between different components of the national elite, controversial issues might be expected to divide the elite into distinct, informal camps of like-minded persons, with one camp being clearly more central in the network. To illustrate, one of the most controversial issue items in the American elite opinion survey was the statement that 'We should have more effective taxation of inheritance to minimize the passing on of large family fortunes'. Seventy-nine per cent of business leaders opposed this statement, but it was supported by 93 per cent of trade union leaders (Barton, 1985: 192–4). In all three surveys, similarly large cleavages existed between different elite sectors on several issue

items (for Australia, see Higley, Deacon and Smart, 1979: 120–45; for West Germany, see Hoffmann-Lange, 1986: 125–30).

Elites with sharply opposing views nevertheless interact extensively with each other in the countries we are considering. Analysis of highly controversial issues shows that the diversity of issue attitudes is as great in the central circles and circle cores as it is in the larger elite samples. In short, within each network segment, diversity rather than homogeneity of opinions seems to be the rule. Additional support for this observation comes from analyses of issue cleavages among our American respondents done by Barton (1985) and Parsons (1976). On seven attitude scales, Barton (1985: 206) finds that central circle members' scores differ only slightly from the mean scores of the sample as a whole, leading him to conclude that attitude homogeneity is not a feature of the central circle. Parsons finds that central circle members are more willing to compromise on policy questions than are elite persons who are not in the central circle (1976: 302–6).<sup>10</sup> Thus, agreement on policy attitudes is not more common among members of the central circle or the circle core than among elites as a whole, though openness to compromise may be a characteristic that somewhat distinguishes circle members from their less centrally located colleagues.

#### DISCUSSION

Proponents of the power elite, ruling class and pluralist perspectives on elite integration in stable democracies have frequently couched their analyses in terms of elite circles. For C. Wright Mills, the American power elite of the 1950s consisted of 'those political, economic, and military circles which as an intricate set of overlapping cliques share decisions having . . . national consequences' (Mills, 1956: 18). But while Mills portrayed the power elite in circle terms, he was vague about its configurations, merely alluding to an unspecified number of military, economic and 'public decision-making' circles whose members have common social origins, career patterns, life styles, and thus personality and other psychological affinities

(pp. 278–83). Regarding the overall integration of the elite, Mills claimed that some small number of persons who belong to two or more of these 'higher circles' integrate them and constitute the power elite's 'inner core' (pp. 288–9). Meanwhile, pluralists have contended that elites in democracies are arrayed in 'a cluster of interlocking circles, each one preoccupied with its own professionalism and expertise and touching others only at one edge' (Bottomore, 1964: 34). Though they do not specify the number, size, or compositions of these elite circles, pluralists believe that they are basically autonomous, have no central coordinating body other than the government itself, and exist in a kind of natural, enduring balance.

Our findings about the structure of American, Australian, and West German national elite networks and the central circles they contain depict a more comprehensive integration of elites than the familiar perspectives separately envisage. On the basis of survey data covering all important elite sectors and major national policy issues that were being actively considered at the times of our research, we find a funnel-like structure of elite communication and discussion about policy issues which is inclusive of all elite sectors and heterogeneous in the social origins, issue attitudes, and party affiliations of the several hundred persons most centrally located in it. The key feature of this structure in each country is a large, diverse, but significantly integrated central circle which itself narrows into a core of tightly interconnected individuals, each of whom is in close contact with several hundred other elite persons in the central circle and beyond it. The extent of elite integration which this funnel-like structure represents accords with what the power elite and some versions of the ruling class perspective lead one to expect; but the composition of the structure is more in line with pluralist claims about elite inclusiveness and heterogeneity in stable democracies.

It is important to be clear about what these data do and do not show. The first issue is whether the elite circles are a methodological artifact rather than a substantive result. One might argue that since our positional samples

were supplemented by snowball samples and included individuals because of their links to others in the network, the connectedness of the network is a trivial result of our sampling procedure. However, only a few respondents belonged to the snowball samples and their numbers are not sufficient to explain the overall connectedness of the elite networks. Further, imagine two counter-examples: If respondents from each sector named non-sample members only from their own sector, the result would be circles organized by sector. Similarly, if elites were involved in a single issue area and respondents named only a few fellow activists on that issue, the result would be a structure fragmented overall.

One could ask to what extent the resulting structure was predetermined by the choice of the overlap criterion utilized for merging cliques and circles, with merging when two-thirds of one group also belong to another. A more demanding criterion would have resulted in a more fragmented structure, while a more lenient criterion would have produced a more inclusive structure. Our overlap criterion avoids both of these extremes. It allows indirect links to be seen as important means of structural integration, while also requiring considerable overlap, to guarantee that integration is not based on single individuals connecting otherwise disparate cliques or circles. Therefore, we can safely conclude that the central circles found are *not* methodological artifacts.

An equally important question is the basis of access to the elite networks. Influence on nationally important decisions is most often based on the power resources associated with elite positions, but may also rest on the personal qualities of individuals. While the large numbers of holders of senior elite positions among circle members indicate the importance of formal power resources for the resolution of nationally-important issues, the inclusion of other persons lacking those resources shows that personal attributes such as knowledge and social skills are also important. It is also true, however, that the positionally-defined elite sample that constituted the original basis for the nomination of interaction partners enhances the chances of holders of senior elite positions becoming

members of the elite networks and central circles. Still, the inclusion of snowball respondents as well as non-respondents who were *not* holders of such positions at the time of the surveys shows that influence on national issues is by no means limited to individuals who control important organizational power resources. And vice versa, only a small number of all holders of elite positions showed up in the elite central circles.

Our data are limited in several respects. We have already noted that the data grossly underestimate the actual density of the elite networks studied. The incompleteness of the network matrices also means that one must not reify memberships of specific individuals in the networks or central circles. Instead, we concentrate on their overall compositions and structures. Although the several hundred individuals who make up each central circle were clearly important, nationally-known figures at the times of our studies, other prominent persons were not included. Moreover, because issues and elite position-holders are continually changing, it is clear that the structure we have analyzed must be regarded as fluid. Nevertheless, since the number of large and powerful organizations whose top position-holders are necessarily in the thick of national elite interactions is relatively small and invariant in the short run, the rough proportions of different elite sectors in networks and circles are probably fairly stable.

Our data are also not appropriate for studying issue-specific networks. Pappi has argued that 'the merging of links, irrespective of discussion topics, into one large network wipes away all issue-specific contours and identifies a core region of persons active in several issue areas'. He adds, however, that this is not necessarily a disadvantage, 'because mediating between different issue publics is one of the principal functions of the integrative core of an elite system' (1984: 85).

Similarly, we have no information on the content of the relations on which the network analyses were based. Since decisionmaking routinely involves clashes between opposing interests, it is realistic to assume that the respondents named not only interaction partners

with whom they agreed, but also their adversaries. Since our study deals primarily with elite integration, however, the content of links is of secondary importance since friendly as well as conflictual relations contribute to elite integration, so long as conflicts are multifaceted and do not regularly involve the same parties.

The relational network model generally neglects differences of power other than those associated with network positions. Therefore, our model of democratic elites is based on the assumption that, due to their fluid and interstitial nature, elite circles are relatively egalitarian structures. We consider *access* to decisionmaking arenas as the single most important resource in decisionmaking. While it is often true that the control of power resources is a precondition of such access, we contend that no simple hierarchy of power exists among the members of elite circles. Class theorists have instead often assumed that economic resources are ultimately decisive and invariably determine the outcomes of decisions.

Finally, the approach also neglects *policy outcomes*. Whether the outcomes produced by these structures are skewed in favor of one elite sector or faction, or whether they approximate a rough equilibrium among elites, are questions we cannot answer with these data. Patterns in the results can be interpreted as pointing in both directions. For example, the large number and generally central locations of key business leaders in each country's central circle and core suggest that business elites are positioned to get their way on economic and other salient issues more often than not, as would be expected by class theorists. On the other hand, the fact that political and governmental elites are even more numerous and pivotally located in each country's central circle and core, and the fact that this results from their close ties to all elite sectors, not just to business, implies that the power and influence of business elites are much less than hegemonic. In our view, crucial is a shared expectation that the system guarantees a fair chance to all participants to assert their interests, i.e. a belief in its distributive justice. This is compatible with an imbalanced distribution of benefits, but *not* with the exclusion of important organizations from decisionmaking.

We were able to demonstrate the existence of inclusive elite central circles in the countries studied. However, one might argue that while an inclusive elite structure indicates political *stability*, it is not necessarily compatible with *democracy* since a small, socially exclusive and attitudinally homogeneous power elite might still dominate the entire range of important organizations. How do we support the claim that the structures we find distinguish democratic from non-democratic elites, especially since non-democratic countries are not examined? Several characteristics of the elite structures can be mentioned here.

The first is the pivotal position of democratically elected politicians in the elite central circles. Moreover, according to Dahrendorf (1967) the existence of elites that reflect the diversity of interests in society, is an important criterion for a successful democracy. Our studies show that the elite circles in all three countries are indeed socially heterogeneous in terms of social class and religious backgrounds and that they also include the leaders of a great variety of organizational sectors and interest groups. Finally, the members of the elite circles were not attitudinally more homogeneous than the members of the much larger positional elite samples. In West Germany, the only country for which we have data that allow us to compare elite and mass political issue attitudes, dissensus over issues was even more pronounced in the elite than in the general population.<sup>11</sup>

Our emphasis on the existence and importance of inclusive, largely informal networks parallels some ideas that have also been discussed by scholars studying consociational democracies (cf. Lijphart, 1969, 1977, 1984; Nordlinger, 1972). In both instances, elites are accorded a central role in managing democratic institutions and mediating political conflicts. Nevertheless, most analyses of consociational democracies pay relatively little attention to the elite networks that underlie them, and they instead concentrate on the consociational patterns of governance in which political inputs and outputs are distributed proportionately among culturally distinct elites and the population segments they lead. Also, consociationalism focuses more or less ex-

clusively on the viability of democracy in subculturally segmented societies, while we are more generally interested in the patterns of elite interactions that distinguish democracies from other types of regimes. Following again Sartori's line of reasoning, we view democracies as located on a continuum on which majoritarian democracy and consociational democracy are to be considered as the polar types, depending on the degree of subcultural segmentation of a society. Real democracies are therefore characterized by a specific blend of majoritarian and non-majoritarian decisions (1987: 240). This may even vary over time according to the development of the salience of sociopolitical cleavages in a society.

Because incumbency in senior positions in powerful formal organizations is the most important determinant of elite locations in these data, the organizational basis of elite networks bulks large in our analysis. In this respect, our findings intersect with those of Laumann and Knoke (1987) on the organizational bases of policy-making networks in the US, and it is instructive to compare and contrast their analysis with our own. Contending that it is the interactions among formal organizations, rather than 'natural persons', that are decisive for policy outcomes in the modern 'organizational state', Laumann and Knoke find 'large, exclusive, highly differentiated communities of policy-making organizations' in two policy domains, health and energy, during the late 1970s and early 1980s (1987: 380).<sup>12</sup>

The patterns that Laumann and Knoke report parallel the thrust of our findings in that they do not readily accord with the conventional perspectives. The extent to which a relatively small number of large organizations monopolize policy-making, and the 'divorce' which they find between organizational interests and the preferences of mass publics do not fit the pluralist perspective. In their main body of data, on the other hand, Laumann and Knoke find little or no evidence of the centralized integration of organizational actors that the power elite and class perspectives lead one to expect: they do not identify any overarching structure analogous to our central circles, and the picture they paint is simply that of a densely

interconnected, inclusive, and issue-based network of organizational actors. However, to the extent that contacts between *organizations* reflect formal institutional structures more than do contacts between *persons*, the absence of a centralized pattern of integration in their data may in part reflect the decision to focus on organizational actors rather than key 'natural persons' (i.e. elites). Had they focused more directly on the numerous informal relations between the elite persons who make such institutions and organizations work, indications of a more centralized interaction structure might well have emerged.

In the the most recent analysis of their data, Heinz *et al.* analyzed the patterns of personal contacts among key representatives of private interest organizations. Instead of an identifiable set of core actors, they found a network in which the notables of their sample were located around an empty center (1990: 381). This result is interpreted as indicating that the system is held together by surface tension rather than the 'magnetism of a dense core' (1990: 382). However, while these results are incompatible with the assumption of an 'inner circle' of business elites managing the American economy (cf. Useem, 1984), it is not inconsistent with our claim of an inclusive elite circle made up of representatives from all major societal sectors. The authors themselves mention that government officials were not included in the analysis and that this omission may account for the absence of a network core. They further note that the central role of politicians probably varies across policy domains (1990: 383). Thus, while we do not deny that elite networks in some policy areas lack a decisionmaking center, we still claim that the overall structure is characterized by the existence of a central elite circle.

Given our concern with the adequacy of the conventional perspectives in conceptualizing national elite integration in stable democracies, we have highlighted common features of American, Australian, and West German elite integration and the ways they cut across the two perspectives. But we are not claiming that these national elites are three peas in a pod, and it is necessary to comment briefly on some of the

patterns that distinguish them. First, it is clear that the network centrality of civil service elites varies according to the structure of national political institutions (see Table 2): very central in Australia's Westminster-derived parliamentary system in which a civil servant is often the second most important official in a government department, after the minister him/herself; essentially peripheral in the US's presidential system with its thick layer of political appointees on the top of the civil service in all departments and agencies; and moderately central in West Germany's system in which policy-making activity in a ministry rests largely with the minister, one or two junior ministers, and several 'political' civil servants (Hoffmann-Lange, 1985).

Second, and similarly, the network centrality of political leaders belonging to major political parties appears to be influenced strongly by a country's form of government (see Table 4). The American presidential form of government, with its separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, enables political leaders associated with one party to achieve centrality by virtue of their control of the White House and the executive branch, while leaders associated with the other party may enjoy equal centrality by virtue of their control of one or both houses of Congress. Thus we find that Republican political leaders, who controlled the executive branch at the time of our American research, were not more numerous in the central circle, and only slightly more numerous in the circle's core, than were their Democratic counterparts, who controlled Congress at the time. Under the parliamentary form of government in Australia and West Germany, by contrast, political leaders affiliated with the party or parties that controlled parliament, and thus also the executive branch (the Labor Party in Australia and the Social Democrats and Free Democrats in West Germany) at the time of our research, were either significantly more numerous in the central circle's core (Australia) or in both the central circle and its core (West Germany) than were leaders of the opposition party or parties.

Following this line of reasoning, we can also speculate that federal systems of government

result in a more balanced distribution of network centrality among the political leaders of all major parties because, regardless of which party or parties control the federal government, leaders of other parties will control important state governments and thus achieve considerable centrality in the national elite network. We would thus expect leaders of the party or parties controlling national governments in unitary political systems to more nearly monopolize the most central network positions. However, because all three of the countries we have examined are federal systems, we can only speculate that comparisons with unitary systems like those of Britain or Sweden would reveal this difference.

It is important to highlight one other national feature that emerges from this research. This is the comprehensively integrated structure of the West German national elite. In so far as this kind of elite structure is a precondition of stable democracy, its existence in West Germany is important evidence that the country has by now joined the ranks of other, well-established Western democracies such as the US and Australia. Debate over the character and democratic proclivities of the West German elite has been a recurrent theme in discussions of the country's politics since its formation after the demise of Nazism (see, *inter alia*, Edinger, 1960; Zapf, 1965; Dahrendorf, 1967; Wildenmann, 1975). While we do not claim that our data are conclusive on this question, our finding that West German national elite structure and functioning in the 1980s differs in no fundamental way from its American and Australian counterparts is one more indication of the stability of West German democracy.

#### CONCLUSION

Examination of the issue-oriented communication structures of national elites in three stable democracies shows that, despite wide variation in the sizes of the American, West German, and Australian populations, national elites in these countries each contain a central circle consisting of a few hundred persons. The sizes, compositions, and densities of these central circles, and even more of their cores, make for close and



frequent interaction among individuals who typically hold the uppermost positions in the most important institutions and organizations of the societies. Although we do not claim that the central circles alone explain the stability of these three democracies, we contend that they are consistent with what recent thinking about elite integration in stable democracies leads one to expect, that they suggest the profit which is to be had in fusing the conventional perspectives, and that they illuminate how power-sharing occurs and is sustained in stable democracies.

In concluding, it is important to recall that all theories of elites begin with the Hobbesian problem of order. Controversies of the Enlightenment period were, after all, less about societies in general than about the necessary and proper roles of governance and elites. In our time, the theory of a power elite or a ruling class depicts order as stemming from the coercive actions of a largely unchecked and unrepresentative elite. Pluralist theory, on the other hand, 'solves' the problem of order by denying the power of elites to do very much on their own. In contrast, our approach describes the mechanisms which govern the governors but which at the same time allow the governors considerable latitude of action. The mechanisms we describe are shifting, informal and mainly invisible central power circles which afford the leaders of different organizations, institutional sectors and camps of opinion relatively easy, safe access to one another. These mechanisms can be thought of as the 'superstructure' which binds elites in stable democracies. In the absence of this superstructure, the problem of order at the level of governance and elites may be solved, as Hobbes saw, in ways that are anathema to democracy.

#### NOTES

1. Thus scholars have traced the stable democratic regimes of England, Sweden, Austria, Costa Rica, Venezuela, and Spain, among others, to sudden and deliberate 'elite settlements' or 'elite pacts' in which previously warring elite factions guaranteed each other's vital interests and created new interaction structures that enabled them to defend and advance their often opposing interests in ways that were consonant with democratic institutions (Wilde, 1978; Hartlyn, 1984; Peeler, 1985; Karl, 1986; O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Gunther, Sani and

- Shabad, 1986; Burton and Higley, 1987a) while maintaining rivalries and competitions which check the power of existing governments (Schumpeter, 1941).
2. The West German data are part of a larger survey of 1,744 persons which is comprised of both the 497 top elite position-holders included here and 1,247 occupants of second-tier elite positions.
  3. The West German snowball sample consists of persons in the sample of second-tier elites who were nominated on sociometric questions by three or more top respondents.
  4. The great muckraker, Lincoln Steffens, was able to trace the illegal activities of political bosses in part because they believed that their activities were legitimate attempts to live up to their obligations. Though we did not know this at the time, some of our American respondents' most vigorous activities were involved in minimizing the impact of the not yet revealed Watergate scandal. One such respondent reported that he was most interested in environmental issues and gave us his network of contacts on matters related to the environment. He did not report his Watergate network. Was this information entirely false? No, because he later wrote a book about environmental issues and obviously cared a good deal about them. Those were his legitimate concerns.
  5. In our view it is folly to assume that in the hour or even two hours that top policy-makers gave us we could correctly distinguish directionality of interaction. For example, key Congressional committee members regularly interact with business leaders. Who starts the interaction is hard to say.
  6. Note again that we do not reify these centrality scores, in the sense that we do not analyze the scores in detail. Rather, we dichotomize the scores into the top 100 and all others. This procedure makes almost moot which measure of centrality we utilize. Moreover, it minimizes the problem of the 'name dropper'—the person who knows exactly which contacts are the 'right' names to give, thus placing himself right in the center of the network, yet who himself is not named by anyone important. Because we do not assume directionality, our analysis is vulnerable to this ploy. In experimental analyses in which we did assume directionality, we uncovered only a few 'name droppers' within the top 75 who are in our sample. Dropping them from the analyses did not substantively change the findings.
  7. The lesser prevalence of the political sectors in the Australian and West German circles, relative to the American circle, is due in part to differences in the sociometric questions among the three studies. In the Australian and West German surveys all respondents were asked to name contacts in several private sectors, while the American study asked these questions only of snowball sample respondents. As a result, fewer persons in non-political sectors were nominated in the American study. Nevertheless, reanalysis of the Australian and American network data, using only nominations from five identical sociometric questions, produced comparable results: the political-governmental sectors maintain their prominence in both networks while

- remaining more numerous in the American network (Higley and Moore, 1981: 591–93).
8. This German pattern is due mainly to the very high degree of organizational centralization among West German trade unions, which makes it difficult to draw a wide sample of trade union leaders whose positions are more or less equivalent in importance.
  9. Father's social class is measured by a modification of Wright and Perrone's neo-Marxist classification (1977) which has four categories: 1. capitalist: owner of a business with at least ten employees; 2. petty bourgeois: owner of a business with zero to nine employees; 3. manager: supervises work of others but not self-employed; 4. worker: not self-employed and does not supervise the work of others (Moore and Alba, 1982: 44).
  10. Parsons' analysis of attitudes towards the Family Assistance Plan, a welfare reform proposal before Congress at the time of the American survey, reveals that central circle members were considerably more willing to compromise, to support the bill even if they personally disapproved of some aspects of it, than were persons outside the central circle.
  11. Our results are also corroborated by Pappi's local elite study in which even a small and exclusive local 'power elite' derived from reputational nominations was *not* characterized by attitudinal homogeneity (Pappi and Kappelhoff, 1984: 105).
  12. Laumann and Knoke portray a policy-making process in which: large-scale organizations are the only effective participants in policy decisions; the boundaries between public and private sectors are blurred, even irrelevant, in the structure of decisionmaking; government organizations frequently promote their own agendas; policy preferences are shaped primarily by non-ideological organizational imperatives as interpreted by autonomous organizational managers; major structural changes are seldom on the agenda; and policy outcomes mainly reflect idiosyncratic organizational interests and shifting interorganizational coalitions rather than the preferences of mass publics (1987: 380–7).
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## APPENDIX A

Sectors and key organizations in the American, West German and Australian elite studies

Sector	Organizations		
	United States	West Germany	Australia
Politics	Cabinet, political appointments, Congress, White House staff, key governors and mayors, parties	Federal and state cabinet, Bundestag, parties	Cabinet, shadow cabinet, parties
Civil Service	Federal departments and independent agencies	Federal ministries, state ministries, statutory agencies	Federal departments, statutory agencies
Business	Fortune 800, centimillionaires, business associations	Largest industrial and non-industrial corporations, business associations	Largest industrial, non-industrial corporations
Unions	Largest unions and federations	Largest unions and federations	Largest unions and federations
Media	Largest newspapers, magazines, TV and radio, press agencies	Largest newspapers, magazines, press agencies, TV, radio	Largest newspapers, magazines, TV, radio
Academic <sup>(a)</sup>	Universities, research institutes	Universities, research institutes	Universities, research institutes
Voluntary Associations	Professional, public affairs, ethnic, women's groups	Churches, professional associations, consumers' associations	Professional, public affairs, women's groups
Other	None	Judicial, military	None

Note: <sup>(a)</sup> The academic sector in the American sample includes only persons in the snowball sample, i.e. those named by several others on the sociometric questions.

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### <sup>1</sup> **Elite Settlements**

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