Power: Interpersonal, Organizational, and Global Dimensions
Monday, 14 November 2005

TOPIC: Power institutionalized, concluded; transformations in authority in modern world

Regarding the film from last class:
The position of O is shaped not by the personal characteristics of O or of particular Xs (desires, wants, needs, intentions, wills) but simply by the **structure** of the situation, the arrangement, the fact that there are few Os and many Xs. We are moving to an understanding of power as something that is *not* located solely in transactions among individuals but may arise from the structure of situations. That there is one O and many Xs is a structured situation which makes random little comments by Xs – what would normally be unimportant – quite important because they *accumulate* and come to mean what it is to *be* an O, etc.

<u>STEPHEN LUKES</u>

In *Power: A Radical View,* Lukes offers a set of steps to understand the power that might be enacted in a transaction in a group and power that lies in situations beyond any individual's control. He calls these **dimensions of power**:

- ◆ **one-dimensional** – (similar to Wrong's definition) the capacity of one actor to do something affecting another that changes the pattern for future events

- ◆ **two-dimensional** – power is exercised when A participates in making decisions that affect B (A doesn't interact with B, but A's decisions affect B). Also exercised when A devotes energies to creating/reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of actions to issues of no importance to A.
    - – *A sets up an agenda so what B can do has no effect on A* (limits effects of B back on A)
    - – this view of power is described by Bachrach & Baratz
    - – very important for **politics**: If the American political system pays no attention to pensions and health care, whose interests are served and whose are not served? What is *not* on the agenda of politics? Examples:
        - – healthcare got on in 1992 and radically fell off after Clinton's effort to do something about universal healthcare. In 2003, Bush saw the rise in interest in healthcare again, got Congress to pass the new drug benefit bill. When it came time for 2004, the Republicans could say they were addressing an issue. But universal healthcare was not on the table! This is what Lukes means: **limit the decisions to issues not of interest to the power holder.**
        - – Paul Krugman compared health care systems in US, Canada, and Europe. Explored the old argument was that the US provided better care even if it wasn't universal – but the data now shows that this is wrong. Routine medical care in US does *not* have better outcomes – only special high end, elective surgery does. Shows that Veteran's Hospitals have recently undergone major improvements; claims that the VA care is better because of all the ways it is not like our standard model. It is universal, full life, well and ill care, no bureaucracy screening service options, negotiate for low price drugs…

◆ **three-dimensional** – power as consequence of collective forces and social arrangements ("structure"). The biases that are embedded in social systems – particular persons have benefited or been disadvantaged – is consequence of not only of individually chosen acts ("intentions") but also of socially/culturally patterned behavior of groups and institutions.

ANTHONY GIDDENS

> Resources treated as structural elements of social systems (e.g. age, income, education, organizational position) are drawn upon by actors in the instantiation of interaction. The power relations sustained in the regularized practices constituting social systems can be considered and reproduced relations of autonomy and dependence in interaction (cf. Simmel). Domination refers to structured (patterned) asymmetries of resources drawn upon and reconstituted in such power relations. Domination...is used in the sense of 'permitting dominion over', dominions concerning the swa actors have over others, and over the material world they inhabit.

This echoes what Carolyn Heilbrun was talking about – age, organizational position may have less relevance in market for public intellectuals than for scholars (e.g. your network with publishers is far more important if you're a public intellectuals than if you were a scholars)

domination = pattern of asymmetry in the resources available

Consider alternative practices of hiring in order to illustrate this **structured inequality** (lots of research done on this issue).
     1) calling friends (need network of associates)
     2) sending letters to number of departments, schools
     3) putting advertisement in public media
- differences result in different people getting a job
- e.g. experiment in which all variables remained constant except "parenting" – women with kids got the least number of callbacks, men with kids got the most! "a family to support." the lesson: **even when you have an open system, we have cultural biases.**   another experiment where name varies, with less minority-sounding names getting more callbacks.
- media ads only appeared in last 30-40 years: we take for granted the fact that because we are at MIT we have a better chance of getting a job because of our **social capital**, a network!

Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman:
- **social capital =** network
- **human capital** = skill and education
- **cultural capital** = knowledge of the symbol system, status, and hierarchies

Authority is the ability to order/forbid and to command, including different types of **command** (Dennis Wrong) – *coercive* (with force), *induced* (with incentive), *legitimate* (shared norms or position in organization), *competent* (knowledge/expertise), *charisma* (based on kind of love, personality of leader, please the leader).

We will now explore this concept of authority further...

Authority in the modern world, or the disenchantment of life

Each form of power draws on different resources: structural positions, personal qualities. Isn't there something more we can say? Is it just a variety of type? Is there some larger pattern in history and social life so that some forms of power are more prevalent than others in different types and in different societies?

There are larger **historical patterns in forms of power**...

Recall that our forms of power, in addition to Luke's three analytic dimensions, there are different **ideal types,** heuristic types, based on the resources invoked. Remember: you'll always find one more than one kind of power! *No social situation is entirely one form of power – there is usually a combination.*

> **The location and sources of authority have shifted in modern society from traditional sacred phenomena to increasingly rational and functional bases – this is the "disenchantment" of the world (Weber). There has been a systematic elimination of God and magic as a principle role in human life.**

This shift from magic and religion to rational and technological is not neutral – it has a pattern of benefits and costs. There are winners and losers in this shift.

The shift from sacred to functional/rational sources of authority is a **shift in who holds power –** it shifted from priests of god to priests of science, the academic professionals. Maybe power didn't shift, but there is a **struggle** going on. The struggle is about the routine exercise of power, therefore the sources of authority.

> **We will review analytic models of authority and community and then technology and the family, seeing how power has shifted, or at least the competition for power. Finally we will discuss how to escape this "iron cage" of knowledge based/ expert authority.**

Beginning in the 1950s/60s/70s, some people argued that **modern life** was characterized by the *lack of local communities, the dislocation of kinship, and the erosion of sacred.* **Community, kinship, religion** were essential foundations for the rise of modern, popular democracies. Without community, kinship, and religion, some argue, we would be prone to tyranny of various sorts and our democracies will fail. This is the idea of an array of writers of various political stripes: e.g. Robert Nisbet, Robert Putnam (*Bowling Alone*), Jimmy Carter (who tries to reconcile politics and religion). It is also behind a lot of talk in the media about "civil society" (not the state, but our everyday lives, with the alleged backbone of community, kinship, and religion).

The founders of modern political democracies were imbued with a fundamental respect for social institutions of property, family, community, religion, voluntary association, cultural and social values (e.g. reason, discipline, self-restraint, and a work ethic). This is the product of long development in Western society. **To neglect the role of these institutions is to misunderstand the ground and raw materials that democracy requires**. (This is one of the critiques some offer of the rationale for the war in Iraq; explanations for the weakness of many 'new' democracies that emerged around the world in movements against colonialism and post-communist.)

The modern democratic **state** was safely constructed because it developed over hundreds of years. Some observers suggest that **we see the forms of the democratic state, but we are losing the background of civil society necessary to sustain it.** Communitarians are particularly worried about this – *is there some pattern of everyday life that is necessary to sustain democratic states?*

To explore this question, we must understand the **shift from traditional to modern** as conceptualized by social scientists:

Ferdinand Tonnies (1855-1936, German) – distinguished *gemeinshaft* (community) from *gesellshaft* (society)
– it was clear that something had radically changed in the process of industrialization – there was the *shift from stable village life to urban mass society.* What did this entail?
    – **stable village life** = homogeneity, connected by blood ties, locally routed, shared beliefs and experiences, orient selves to the collective, social position is ascribed and continuous throughout life, joined through likeness and affection, simple division of labor and fusion of ends and means
    – **urban mass society** = heterogeneity, connected by interest/efficiency/function, connected nationally and people move, relationships based on how we reason and calculate instead of agreement, orient selves individually who can join groups depending on interest or function, social position is achieved, complex division of labor, separation of ends and means

community	society
gemeinshaft	*gesellshaft*
stable village life	urban mass society
homogeneity	heterogeneity
ascribed status	achieved status
affect, blood ties	function, interest
religion	instrumental relations

To illustrate these differences, think of **society as organized in different levels, different size of nested, aggregates: individual, community, nation**
    – middle level = anything we belong to beyond ourselves but not the nation as a whole (e.g. community, clubs, churches, etc.) – Some observers suggest that this middle level is eroding (community, kinship, religion, unions, Putnam says bowling clubs)
    – we get a **society of atomistic individuals – a mass society** - no molecules or DNA, just an atom and the whole, no institutions, organs, or collectives (clearly not so, but the degree to which this may be so is what people argue about)
    – even if we have institutions, they are just functional, the argument goes, – we move in out and of them, have no loyalty, no service **to** them, only from them, it is a consumer relationship

Primary associations of kinship, community, religion have been replaced by friendship, work, instrumental relationships

Without doubt, these have proved effective in the larger **realm of function**. But as far as the individual and her loyalties are concerned, the ties contained in these new organizations seem mechanical without power to create a **sense of membership and obligation** that had been located in the past kinship, locality, and religion.

- challenges the notion of identity politics, environmental politics, gender as sufficient grounds for meaning and purpose in life (e.g. 1990s, "politics of meaning")
- the **family** is no longer the **unit of production** and therefore cannot withstand the onslaught of the state (this is the backbone of Republican party's argument); where the family is still the unit of production, it is strong and thus the state can't affect it as much.

What are the sources of these changes, for the decline of these mediating institutions of kinship, community, and religion?

- ◆ **affluence/abundance** – Responses/behaviors are not anchored in beliefs of what is good but instead in contemplation of the plight of the poor or the desire for more. Until the present, one could not contemplate life without work – ideas of **work and punishment** have gone hand in hand (e.g. Adam and Eve cast out of the Garden of Eden and what was their punishment? They had to work!) Because people have had to work, they have developed the idea that work is good. Work is a vital element in society for everyone except the very few. But it causes disruptions – people **do not have a shared interpretation of work as affluence increases.**

- ◆ **inflation/escalating expectations –** back to de Tocqueville: Although there are strictly economic causes to inflation, other causes are generated by two factors – the priority of material value**s** (**commodity fetishism)** and **social egalitarianism** – that work together to inflate our expectations of social life.
    - **revolution of aspirations/expectations =** single greatest revolution of our time (tied to affluence above, but additional interpretive cultural aspect). For a long time, inherited class attitudes and restricted cultural discourses restrained large numbers of people from indulging material aspirations (e.g. seeking more money or raising social status). There were religious attitudes that work is good, one must save for future, restrained purchasing and aspirations. The strength of family ties and the neighborhood discouraged the individual quest for economic and social status that is the mark of modern life.
    - Now we have national media instead of local media and it transverses social positions – **people everywhere in the socioeconomic hierarchy are seeking similar aspirations**, e.g. similar visual style even if material or quality varies. The media promulgates the aspiration for more.
        - e.g. The media taught people to spend more money after WWII when the economy needed to grow in contrast to the dominant cultural ethic that was to save (Protestant Ethic). An analysis of this is offered by George Lipsitz in *Time Passages:* He discusses TV shows in the 1950s about working class families – situations arise when someone wants to buy something that they don't have the money for. Thus we are *slowly displacing the notion of "don't spend and save for a rainy day" to the notion of "you can spend a little to make your life better now."* Rising

expectations!

- Social science during/after WWII asked what made people unhappy? People didn't feel bad if they were surrounded by people who were the same. They were unhappy when surrounded by people who had *more*. Observers say the **checks/discouragements of wanting more are now gone**.
    - There has been an erosion of what looked like social equality – the formal ways of restricting access eroded and were replaced by **notions of individual action and worth.**
    - de Tocqueville: "Materialism is, amongst all nations, a dangerous disease of the human mind; but it is more especially to be dreaded amongst a democratic people, because it readily amalgamates with that vice which is most familiar to the heart under such circumstances. Democracy encourages a taste for physical gratification: this taste, if it become excessive, soon disposes men to believe that all is matter only; and materialism, in turn, hurries them back with mad impatience to these same delights: such is the fatal circle within which democratic nations are driven round."
    - Jimmy Carter echoes this, saying that in our **pursuit of equality and materialism**, we have demeaned religion. People who are activists have made fun or religion and now there is a divide.

Theme of our continuing discussion: how has the location of power and authority shifted?