THE POWER-CULTURE LINK IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the work of American and European researchers interested in culture has focused on the link between power and culture. It is the topic of major interdisciplinary debates in cultural history, symbolic anthropology, continental philosophy, social theory, literary criticism, mass communication studies, and the sociology of culture. The Birmingham School, American contributions on cultural capital, studies of decision-making processes and control in cultural industries, and poststructuralist and postmodernist criticisms of cultural authority all deal with dimensions of the power/culture link.

The literature seems to have developed around four topics. First, researchers became concerned with control and the inner workings of cultural industries. Then, their attention converged toward documenting historical processes by which culture and knowledge became important as power bases, focusing on credentialism and the growing importance of experts and intellectuals as a new elite (Bell 1972; Collins 1979; Gouldner 1979; Lipset 1979). Also, they developed an interest in subtle forms of domination which had been neglected by classical Marxism. With the growth of mass communication industries, they started...
dealing with the place of intersubjectivity in domination, often building on the
previous work of the Frankfurt School. For instance, they analyzed the shaping
of gender and class relations by television entertainment, as in the Birmingham
School’s work (Hall 1986). Finally, they reconstructed the institutionalization
of types of knowledge that defined specific groups as deviant, resulting in their
exclusion from power and resources (Foucault 1980).

Not surprisingly, this booming area has suffered from a lack of
systematization. Apropos of the growing interest in popular culture, Schudson
(1987) has recently noted that celebrations of popular culture have run counter
to the theoretical development of the field. Similarly, Darnton (1980) criticized
the fadishness of some of the historical work on popular culture. Researchers
have been overly concerned with illuminating or “denouncing” the power/
culture link, and have spent too little time specifying the theories of power
which they use. The same theoretical issues have been worked out over and
over again in parallel lines of research on topics such as cultural resistance,
youth culture, popular culture, and so forth. These repeated attempts bear little
theoretical progress if the theoretical links between power and culture are not
specified, and if researchers neglect the task of systematically contrasting their
own conclusions with those of others. Such omissions seriously hinder the
development of a sociology of culture that would be more rigorous, and equal
other substantive areas in terms of systematization, range, and scope.
Reflexivity is needed at this point.

In this spirit, the present paper takes stock of the basic types of power/culture
links which are found in the literature. I argue that researchers have come more
and more to conceptualize power as indirect power, that is, the capacity to
structure others’ lives. Simultaneously, they have probed the role of culture
in this process, and have viewed it as a shaping force and a resource. But they
have also left unexplored issues which are relevant for a more complex
understanding of how power structures people’s lives, and how culture mediates
this process. These issues mostly deal with cross-national differences in cultural
selection processes or the salience of culture and knowledge as resources for
power. I explore such issues, focusing on concrete questions such as: Are there
important cross-cultural differences in repertoires of signals used to create
status boundaries? Does cultural exclusion from high status groups affect
equally chances for mobility in countries as different as the United States and
France? Do people care as much about displaying high status cultural
characteristics in the United States as in Great Britain? I explore the theoretical
underpinnings of these questions, distinguishing between tightly and loosely
bounded cultures where cultural selection varies in frequency, and affects
individuals differently.

The first section of the paper identifies two approaches to power that underlie
much of the literature: direct and indirect theories of power. It surveys four
predominating perspectives in this literature, and identifies underlying theories
of power. The final section discusses cross-national differences in cultural
hierarchies and cultural selection processes. It provides exploratory
propositions and presents supporting evidence from the literature. I use cross-
national examples contrasting advanced industrial societies where culture
seems to mediate power relations differently, particularly, France and the
United States.2

THE POWER-CULTURE LINK

Researchers working on the power/culture link have implicitly or explicitly used
two different theories of power, which I call direct and indirect power. Direct
power is the most widespread conception of power in American sociology.
Predominating in the literature until the late sixties, it is still widely used by
social psychologists (Harzany 1977), and was brought into focus during the
power structure debate. It refers to the capacity to force or coerce someone to
do something he/she would not do otherwise. Most notable among those who
contributed to theories of direct power are Weber (1946) and Dahl (1968).3

A familiar variant of direct power theory, the exchange theory of power,
emphasizes the conditions for the exercise of power, focusing on dependency
relations. Blau (1964) defined power as the capacity to impose one’s will on
others despite resistance and through positive or negative incentives. Along
with Emerson (1962) and others, he suggested that the power of A over B
depends on the dependency of B on A, that is, on A’s control over resources
in which B has a motivational investment—resources that are not available
outside the A-B relationship.4 In both direct power theories, the criteria to
distinguish power from other types of relationships is the unwilling compliance
of the subordinate individual(s) or group(s), and the superordinate actor’s
intent to exercise power (Parsons 1967) provides an opposing view.

Indirect power refers to the capacity to place someone in a disadvantageous
position by (1) imposing a definition of a situation that actors would not choose
if they could (e.g., by defining standards and criteria of access to resources
incompatible with the attributes of others); (2) structuring one’s situation so
that this person would not choose it if he/she could (e.g., by reducing others’
resources or autonomy). Several theories of indirect power have been proposed,
mostly by European scholars, who used terms as varied as three-dimensional
power, meta-power, relational power, and more often, hegemony (Clegg 1979;
Giddens 1984; Gramsci 1971; Lukes 1974; Therborn 1982).5

Indirect power theories are explicitly framed against direct power theories
and consider power as ubiquitous in social life, operating in face-to-face
relationships and at the macrolevel. These theories are not instrumental; power
is viewed as being mostly exerted through the pursuit of other goals, rather
than through discrete acts aimed at domination (Giddens 1984). Power
produces domination or imposition, the latter referring to situations where A does not actively dominate B but acts toward other purposes which create an undesirable situation for B. There is domination/imposition if A deprives B of symbolic or material resources or limits his/her autonomy. This description summarizes indirect power theories, bearing in mind that these all differ in some respect. Theories of direct and indirect power impinge on all of the literature on the power/culture link. They constitute its central, often unstated, assumptions. With these theories in the background, researchers have come to view culture as (1) a terrain where power relations develop; (2) a resource on which coercion is based; (3) a mediation of power relations via the shaping of desires and consciousness; and (4) a mediation of power relations via exclusion based on cultural cues. While the first three perspectives have constituted the core of this literature up to this point, and come to a full bloom in the eighties, the fourth perspective points toward a new array of cross-cultural issues. Before examining these, I briefly survey each of the four perspectives and their underlying conception of power to help identify the theoretical loopholes in the literature.

Power Relations in Cultural Industries

Before researchers began analyzing subtle forms of symbolic domination, American sociologists came to view cultural industries as one of many terrains where people fight for control, or direct power. Those associated with the production-of-culture approach became interested in the division of labor, the control of resources and the decision-making processes within these industries. I am here referring to work such as Peterson (1978) on change in the country music industry, Becker (1982) on the division of labor and interdependence of cultural producers and mediators (critics, gallery owners), Crane (1972, 1987) on gatekeepers in the scientific and artistic communities, and White and White (1965) on the dealer/critic relationship. Others have had a more Marxist slant, but were also concerned with control, notably Gitlin (1983) and Cantor (1980) on the decision process in the television industry, and Frith (1981) on control in the record industry. These studies were not generally concerned with developing elaborate theoretical frameworks concerning the power/culture link; their contribution was mostly documentary, describing the ins and outs of capitalist or state control.

Culture and Knowledge as Resources for Power

The segment of the field concerned with culture and knowledge as a power resource has always been one of the most vital in the United States. Studies of the knowledge elite in postindustrial society and the rise of the new class (Bell 1972; Gouldner 1979; Lipset 1981); of professionalization and the institutionalization of expertise as a basis for authority (Foucault 1972, Friedson 1986); of cultural authority (Clifford and Marcus 1986); and of the power of intellectuals in the West, in East European societies and in left-wing parties (Konrad and Szelenyi 1979; Lipset and Dobson 1972) mostly conceive culture and knowledge as resources that can be mobilized to support the power of a specific group. These studies are conceptually kindred to the exchange theory of power in that they emphasize resources (or potential power bases) as being the most important determinant of the exercise of power. Couched in terms of power theory, these works implicitly bring into focus the objective structural determinants of power because they pertain to the effect of the distribution of resources on the ability of actors to exercise direct power.

The Power to Define

To the extent that culture is made of classification systems or ideologies which are instrumental in the reproduction of macrolevel or microlevel power relations, it can be said to mediate indirect power, or to be central in the shaping of people's lives. The definition of reality is one of the major forms of indirect power, and it has been at the center of European sociology of culture for a while. One of the most notable examples of this type of work is the Frankfurt School's contributions on cultural alienation. The argument typically runs as follows: audiences are manipulated by the diffusion of escapist entertainment and truncated messages. The latter misrepresent relations of domination, and prevent political mobilization by diffusing passive attitudes and promoting consumption, thereby reinforcing the cohesiveness of capitalism and political control (Horkheimer and Adorno 1944; Lowenthal 1961). Akin examples are Marx and Engels's (1970) dominant ideology thesis, Gramsci's (1971) theory of hegemony, and Bourdieu's (1977) theory of symbolic violence, where the dominant class is seen as universalizing its own political ideology, vision of the world, and experience as authoritative and universal—thereby reinforcing its control. This perspective has been widely used in the United States (e.g., Gitlin 1980; Gottdiener 1985; Tuchman 1974) and elsewhere (Dorfman 1983; Mattelart and Siegelaub 1979). Along the same lines, Foucault (1972) has followed Levi-Strauss's (1963) concern with the unthinkable and the unconscious, focusing on the very categories through which the world is defined.

The ways in which culture mediates power relations by defining reality seem to be relatively well understood. The key propositions present obvious problems of verification. If actors do not perceive their class interest or are unconscious of being dominated, how can it be demonstrated that specific definitions of situations are detrimental to them? Are these verification problems sufficient grounds for dismissing theories of indirect power.
altogether? Researchers differ on this issue. For some, documenting and describing power in all its subtle forms is per se a valuable enterprise, even if it does not produce falsifiable theories.

The Power to Exclude

Cultural exclusion is a subtype of indirect power exercised through framing and defining others’ lives, as it entails imposing standards of evaluation and access to groups. It is one of the most widespread mechanisms through which indirect power is exercised. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Collins (1979), DiMaggio and Mohr (1985), Douglas (1966), and Weber (1946) have contributed to analyzing the creation of status groups and monopolization of privileges. They have addressed how interpersonal identifiers of social ranking are used to mark cultural distance and proximity, monopolize privileges, exclude and recruit new occupants to high status positions, and create group boundaries. These identifiers are recognized as such by those who possess the legitimate culture. They are the basis for status boundaries as they signal participation in high status groups and distance from cultural practices, preferences, and groups that are “common”, “easy”, “natural”, and “undemanding” (Bourdieu 1984, p. 31). In the United States, a body of work has been developing around this topic, focusing on cultural capital and cultural reproduction (Lamont and Lareau 1988).

The hierarchization of cultural signals, cues, or symbols is a condition for cultural exclusion, as it fixes their value and defines the range of those which can be used as a basis for cultural exclusion in various situations—the higher the status of signals, the larger the scope of situations where they create exclusion, bearing in mind that low-status groups hold cultural hierarchies which are often autonomous from the mainstream hierarchies. Therefore, cultural hierarchies are supra-individual, and one of the most important conditions for the exercise of indirect power. The control of their definition is an important stake in power relations between groups.

Many studies addressing directly or indirectly cultural hierarchies are now available. They have been studied by the Ecole des Annales and American historians of popular culture (Darnton 1980; Davis 1965). Bourdieu (1969, 1985) and Elias (1978) have worked on hierarchies of cultural goods, literary genres, and cultural producers, while the Birmingham School studied youth and class culture in Britain (Hall 1986). These studies take a relativist standpoint, extrapolating it to aesthetic taste and lifestyles in order to “reconstruct” or identify cultural hierarchies, and show their arbitrariness.

Of the four perspectives reviewed, the first two are concerned with direct power, that is, with control and the use of culture and knowledge as a resource for coercion and control. The last two perspectives have more of a structural focus in that they question how culture mediates power relations by framing people’s lives, that is, by defining reality or by being mobilized to define status boundaries. A growing interest in understanding how culture mediates indirect power is clearly developing. The focus should now shift toward even more structural issues, such as the conditions for the use of culture and knowledge as power resources. For instance, How is the status of cultural goods, attitudes, and behaviors institutionalized? How do they gain value as resources? Appadurai (1986), Bourdieu (1985), DiMaggio and Johnson (1987) have viewed the process as a conflictive one between and within classes.10 But do these conflicts involve the same groups and institutions to the same extent cross-nationally? Are the high status cues the same across societies? Is cultural selection equally stringent and frequent? The cross-cultural focus makes possible comparisons of the impermeability of status boundaries, and of the stability of cultural hierarchies, which are macrolevel or structural phenomena. It is also possible now to compare the effect of various types of cultural signals on the positioning of individuals in stratification systems, that is, the extent to which cultural resources have structural effects or can shape access to high status position, in contrast to wealth for instance.

NEW THEORETICAL DIRECTIONS

We now have to be concerned with cross-national variations in (1) the process by which cultural hierarchies become institutionalized; (2) the degree of consensus on cultural hierarchies; (3) the degree to which cultural exclusion affects positioning in stratification systems; and (4) the degree to which culture and knowledge are institutionalized as power bases. I discuss these issues by looking at two types of advanced industrial societies, that is, societies with loosely and tightly bounded cultures.

Building on Merelman (1984) who develops themes found in Levi-Strauss (1963), I define loosely bounded cultures as cultures where consensus on high status cultural cues and cultural hierarchies is weak, and where systems of classification are made of loosely defined conceptual oppositions. Loosely bounded cultures have high tolerance for cultural deviance; cultural practices are not strongly hierarchized. Cultural laissez-faire—or laxity—which is characterized by high rates of cultural innovation in pastime activities and lifestyles, is predominant. In contrast, tightly bounded societies have relatively strong consensus on cultural hierarchies—on high status tastes and lifestyles; cultural practices (e.g., table manners) are clearly coded and widely agreed upon; systems of classification are structured around well-defined dichotomized oppositions (right and wrong, good and bad, and so forth);11 lifestyles are more traditional; and cultural innovation is less frequent. Also, child-rearing is more strict because the information and habits to be transmitted are structured and require disciplined learning. Knowledge about highly institutionalized forms of
cultural activities, such as high cultural practices (the arts and literature), is more widely diffused than in loosely bounded cultures. Intellectualism is more highly valued. Finally, in tightly bounded societies, snobbish attitudes and behaviors are more frequent, and distance in interpersonal relationships is greater, as the status of cultural behaviors is well-defined and provide clear information about possible associations and degrees of intimacy.

I examine the United States and France as examples of societies with loosely and tightly bounded cultures, and at times, I extend the comparison to other societies which present some characteristics of loosely bounded or tightly bounded cultures. First, providing evidence from the existing literature, I demonstrate the loose-boundedness and tight-boundedness of American and French cultures, discussing differences in the repertoire of high status cultural cues and in the process of institutionalization of cultural hierarchies in the two societies. Second, I suggest hypotheses about macro social-structural features reinforcing national variations in the structure of cultural hierarchies.

French culture is in many respects the ideal type of tightly bounded cultures. In many areas—manners, dress, pastime activities, taste—codes of behavior and attitudes are clearly defined and hierarchical (Bourdieu 1984). For instance, like the Italian, German, and Spanish cuisine, French cuisine has elaborate rules concerning the preparation and consumption of food (Mennell 1985). The degree of autonomy of low-prestige subcultures (e.g., working class, peasant, and immigrant subcultures) from the mainstream culture is difficult to evaluate. However, Bourdieu (1984) suggests that this autonomy is relatively low. In his collaborative work with Passeron, he argues that cultural literacy and familiarity with high culture are important high status cultural signals, and are diffused by the schooling to the middle and working classes (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Consequently, knowledge of history and philosophy, as well as familiarity with the arts and literature are highly valued across classes, and are often salient in the creation of status boundaries. If low-status groups do not use these signals themselves in creating status boundaries, they show “cultural goodwill,” that is, assign a high value to them (Bourdieu 1984, chap. 6). The uniformity of the school curriculum, the cultural hegemony of Paris, the administrative centralization of culture—and the education-related state agencies in the capital, and the quasi-state monopoly of broadcasting contribute to reinforce the spread of clearly defined symbolic boundaries in the French population.

Other advanced industrial societies with strong high culture traditions and high cultural homogeneity also fit the model of tightly bounded societies: Austria, Italy, Japan, Spain, and West Germany, for instance. This is suggested by Hofstede’s (1980) study of work-related values. His research shows that Latin and Germanic countries have high uncertainty avoidance (e.g., strong rule orientation) which is likely to be associated with clear symbolic boundaries. More cultural indicators, such as those developed by Clark (1987) and Rosengren (1984), are needed to tap differences and assess the degree of tight-boundedness of the societies.

Merelman’s (1984) study of American advertising, television entertainment, and education proposes that American culture is a loosely bounded culture. Cultural consensus is likely to be lower in the United States than in France, as regional, ethnic and racial subcultures are relatively autonomous from the mainstream culture. Studies such as Horowitz (1983) have documented how ethnic groups maintain autonomy from dominant values by reinterpreting those values within their own cultural tradition.

Transgressions between cultural genres and styles have largely characterized American cultural endeavors in various areas. American cuisine, for instance, features eclectic experiment, mixes between ethnic and regional traditions, and personal inventiveness (Favreau 1987). The looseness of symbolic boundaries is expressed in American ideals of egalitarianism and tolerance for cultural differences (Inkeles 1979; Lipset 1979). Along the same lines, Wylie and Henriquez’s (1982) study of French textbooks showed that French stereotypes of Americans emphasize cultural tolerance. A study by Lambert, Hamers and Frasure-Smith (1979) of child-rearing practices suggests that middle-class Americans, English-Canadians, French-Canadians, and Britons are similarly lenient in contrast to Portuguese, Greeks, Italians, Belgians, and French (p. 318). In the United States, symbolic boundaries are relatively less stable because of the combined effect of the sheer size of the country, high social and geographical mobility, strong cultural regionalism, great ethnic and racial diversity, political decentralization, and relatively weak high culture traditions (Wilensky 1964; Kerchoff 1972).

A dominant cultural system appears to exist in the United States despite these cross-cutting cleavages. Indeed, studies of cultural reproduction consistently show that lower-middle-class white, black, and Hispanic youth are culturally handicapped, which considerably reduces their rate of upward mobility (Heath 1983). If in France, knowledge of high culture is central in the dominant cultural system, is this also true for the United States? Part of the American work on cultural capital (i.e., high status cultural symbols) has followed the French work in focusing almost exclusively on “high culture” (Lamont and Lareau 1988) critique this literature). However, it appears that people are not admired, and defined as intelligent or interesting, for the same reasons in France and in the United States. The same personal traits are not seen as desirable across work settings. I suggest that typical middle class and upper-middle class practices and preferences such as contractual relationships, and self-directiveness (Barry 1977; Kohn 1977) are more pervasive than high culture as bases of cultural selection in the United States in contrast to tightly bounded cultures.

Ethnographic studies and research using in-depth interviews have shown that a conspicuous concern with economic success, and the display of attitudes such
as pragmatism, self-reliance, problem-solving activism, and entrepreneurship are very highly valued in the United States (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton 1985; Varenne 1977). Similarly, Gallup, Gallup, and Proctor's (1986) recent survey of determinants of success conducted with a sample of Americans listed in Who's Who, showed that "being a hard worker," "having common sense" and "being able to get things done," "being self-reliant" and "having well-defined goals" are listed most often as personal characteristics contributing to success in one's chosen field (p. 215). These attitudes are related to character rather than to familiarity with high culture. Along the same lines, Seeley, Sim, and Loosely (1956) in the only systematic analysis of the upper-middle class culture in North America depicted future-oriented individuals who emphasized competitiveness, valued achievement in isolation, judged status by success, and conducted their lives as if they were an enterprise (also Cookson and Persell 1985). In an ongoing study of the Indianapolis middle- and upper-middle classes, respondents were much less likely to consider "being cosmopolitan" and "being well-read" as desirable qualities for oneself and one's friends than being self-confident, honest, and trustworthy. Again, this suggests that there are indeed high status cultural signals in the United States, and that these signals pertain more to character than to knowledge of high culture.

Generalization from the United States case to other loosely bounded cultures are premature: valued attributes are likely to vary across societies, and have to be carefully researched, using comparative studies (e.g., Lipset 1985). However, I venture to suggest that in contrast to tightly bounded cultures, loosely bounded culture are more likely to value highly a distinct type of character than familiarity with high culture. Other loosely bounded societies would include non-European English-speaking countries (Australia, Canada, and New Zealand), and, to a lesser extent, Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Norway, and Sweden). I hypothesize that the degree of boundedness of these societies is at a midpoint between Japan, the German and Latin countries on the one hand, and the United States on the other. This is suggested by Hofstede (1980) whose results show that English-speaking and Scandinavian countries are similar in terms of degree of uncertainty avoidance.

Understanding cultural hierarchies implies analyzing how high status cultural cues are institutionalized as such. Of obvious interest here are cross-cultural differences in the role played by various classes in producing cultural hierarchies. I suggest that in the United States, the upper-middle class is more effective than other classes in institutionalizing its culture as high status. This is evidenced by the control of decision-making positions by upper-middle class members in large bureaucracies, which allows them to impose de facto their own definition of high status cultural signals in promotion decisions; by the relative numerical importance of the upper-middle class in contrast to the upper class, which extends its cultural influence; and by the position of control of many upper-middle class members in a number of cultural institutions, such as advertising, television entertainment, and higher education. Coleman and Rainwater (1978) have shown that the income level and lifestyle of college-educated professionals and managers are seen as ideal by the average American, which suggests that indeed they provide a dominant cultural model in American society. The American middle class is certainly also successful in legitimating its culture, but the latter is a template of mass culture, rather than of high status culture, and mass culture by definition cannot provide cues for selection. The cultural influence of the upper-middle class is probably also strong in most advanced industrial societies, and particularly in those with a large upper-middle class (Japan, Sweden, West Germany).

Cross-national differences in the influence of various types of cultural producers are likely to be stronger than differences in the influence of the upper-middle class. I propose that in loosely bounded societies, intellectuals and educators have little cultural influence in contrast to the mass media, partly because they produce and diffuse cultural information that is too structured to be widely diffused. This is clearly the case in the United States, where intellectuals are less influential than they are in most European countries (Jacoby 1987; Lamont 1987), despite the declining influence of Marxist intellectuals in Europe (Gagnon 1987; Ross 1987). This is reflected in the lesser prestige of the literary elite in the United States in contrast to France (Clark 1979), in the lesser support given by the American than by the French government to writers through literary prizes or grants (Clark 1980), as well as in the greater importance given to cultural diplomacy in French foreign affairs.

The degree of cultural tightness or looseness affects how, and with how much effectiveness, cultural exclusion is exercised. In tightly bounded cultures, cultural selection is more stringent. As Berger and Luckman (1964), Douglas and Isherwood (1979) and Wuthnow (1987) point out, for culture to be a tool for communication, it has to be widely diffused and function as a convention among people. For instance, if table manners are not clearly codified, these cannot provide cues for cultural selection. American ethnographic studies consistently observe norms of friendliness and openness in interpersonal relations which would indicate that cultural selection is low in the United States, especially in the Midwest and the South (Varenne 1977). In contrast, Lerner (1961) convincingly describes several mechanisms that are used by the French to create interpersonal distance (using "vous" for instance).

In loosely bounded societies, cultural selection is likely to be less determinant of individual positioning in stratification systems. In other words, symbolic boundaries are likely to have less of a structural effect on positioning; education and high status cultural signals are likely to impinge less on people's life-chances than other types of resources such as wealth (e.g., United States vs France, or within the United States, Texas vs East Coast). It is interesting to note that several tightly bounded cultures have relatively low rates of mobility across manual and non manual class boundaries (France, West Germany, Italy,
Spain), while countries with a tradition of leniency in child-rearing have higher rates of mobility (Lenski 1966, p. 411).

Differences in style in interpersonal relations (frequency of snobbish behavior, degree of intimacy) are related to institutionalized national cultural traditions. However, they are seemingly reinforced by macrostructural societal features. I propose that the higher the national economic growth and occupational mobility rate, the less likely people are to emphasize cultural differences as a way to improve their status, and to exercise cultural exclusion. This proposition posits, following Marcuse (1977) and Bourdieu (1984), that limited possibilities for upward economic mobility between and within social classes are compensated for by investment in education and culture, especially in the upper-middle class. Periods of economic stagnation would see an increase in the consumption of sophisticated cultural goods: by consuming “a produit de luxe,” or by displaying one’s familiarity with high status, partly by excluding others. Occupational mobility is generally lower for societies with tightly bounded cultures (West Germany, Italy, Spain), while loosely bounded societies have higher rates of mobility (with the exception of Japan) (Tyree, Semyonov, and Hodge 1979, p. 416).

I suggested that there are important cross-cultural variations in the degree to which culture as a type of resource impinges on people’s life-chance in contrast to other types of resources such as wealth. These variations indicate differences in the degree of institutionalization of culture as a power basis, that is, in the degree to which individuals’ direct power is based on their knowledge or high status cultural cues. The degree of institutionalization of culture and knowledge as power resources is likely to vary with the dependency of culture and knowledge-related jobs (in the arts, education, religion, and research) on profit-making which in turn, varies with macrostructural societal features, that is, the size of the public and nonprofit sectors which provide an organizational base for the production and diffusion of culture freel from market pressures (on profit-making activity, see Weber 1978, p. 340).

National differences in the dependency of culture toward profit maximization can be measured by cross-national data such as (1) the prestige of the humanities in higher education in contrast to business-related professional fields; (2) the salaries and occupational prestige of highly skilled occupations that are not aimed primarily at profit maximization; (3) and the presence of intellectuals and academics in the political elite. The dependency might be lower in some tightly bounded societies, as suggested by the strong presence of French intellectuals in the political elite (Gaxie 1980), and the alienation of intellectuals in American society (Lasch 1969; Lipset and Dobson 1972; Wald 1982).

The extent of dependency of culture and knowledge on profit-making can also be measured by the size of social service expenditures; this provides an indication of the spread of postmaterialist values, and the spread of nonprofit oriented activities (Inglehart 1977). Social service expenditures are larger in most tightly bounded societies (Austria, with 20.2% of GNP in social service expenditures; Germany, 19.6%; France, 17.8%; Belgium, 16.2%); and in some loosely bounded societies (Sweden, 15.6%; Norway, 12.2%). The advanced industrial societies with the lowest social service expenditures include Canada (10.6), the United States (7.9), Australia (8.9), and New Zealand (11.3) (Hewett 1977, adapted from Wilenski 1975). Comparative data on the size of the nonprofit sector are not available at this point.21 More research on the effect of macro-structural features on the degree of institutionalization of culture and knowledge as power resources is needed.

CONCLUSION

Studies of national repertoires of ways to exercise and experience cultural selection are long overdue, and are important to understanding the micromechanisms of the reproduction of stratification systems. Along these lines, I have argued that new research directions on the power/culture link should focus on conditions for the use of culture and knowledge as salient power bases, and on how cultural exclusion affects positioning in stratification systems. To address these issues, I have proposed a distinction between tightly and loosely bounded cultures and looked at differences in high status cultural symbols, and in the role played by various types of cultural producers in institutionalizing cultural hierarchies. I have indicated that cultural features of advanced industrialized societies affect the interrelation of power and culture by influencing the extent to which culture mediates indirect power through cultural exclusion. These differences are of course related to long-standing national cultural tradition and to the national history of the countries under consideration, but are also reinforced by social-structural variations, such as the size of the public and nonprofit sectors. Obviously, these propositions are mostly suggestive and need much refinement and empirical support. In particular, more empirical indicators measuring the degree of cultural boundedness of various societies are needed. However, these propositions do open the way for more comparative studies of the link between power and culture.

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NOTES

1. Researchers concerned with the power/culture link have recently inaugurated several journals. See for instance *Theory. Culture and Society* (U.K.), *The Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* (Canada), and a number of newer British journals such as *New Formations, Cultural Studies*, and *Textual Practice*.

2. The writings discussed here are concerned with a broad range of definitions of culture. For the sake of simplicity, when referring to culture, I will be discussing cultural goods, attitudes, and behaviors. Cultural goods include art, science, knowledge, clothes, food, furniture, paintings, and books; cultural attitudes include aesthetic value judgments, value orientations; and cultural behavior concerning lifestyle and consumption patterns. Space limitations prevent me from reviewing definitions of culture used in the literature, which have been reviewed elsewhere (e.g., Ortner 1984; Swidler 1986).

3. Weber defined power as the capacity of an actor in a relationship to impose his/her will despite resistance (William, Tatsis, and Zito 1977). Dahl (1968) and others who have followed his lead have defined power as A's capacity to influence B. Wrong (1979) extensively reviewed the literature on direct power.

4. By convention, A refers to the subordinate actor(s), whereas B refers to the subordinate actor(s).

5. Lukes (1974) defines power as A affecting B in a manner contrary to his/her interest. Chazan (1983) provides a good detailed analysis of several of these approaches.

6. The conditions under which domination is said to be exercised are rarely made explicit in the literature on power, which creates considerable theoretical confusion.

7. Theories of indirect power have been widely criticized for their behavioral focus, their individualist and rationalist assumptions (Lukes 1974), and for their focus on decision making (Bachrach and Baratz 1962). The exchange theory of power gives no consideration to how specific resources become institutionalized as salient power bases (Birnbaum 1976). On the other hand, theories of indirect power have been criticized for their unfalsifiability. As critics of hegemony and false consciousness theories observe (Benton 1981; Brashad 1976), because those theories posit the alienation of dominated groups, the distinction between power and other types of relationships such as structural determination, influence, or reciprocal exchange is difficult to establish. This theoretical discussion of indirect power has reached a nominalist dead-end, and the ball is now in the court of empirical researchers (e.g., Gaventa 1980).


9. Space limitations prevent the exploration of this literature in greater depth.

10. Bourdieu (1984) argues that lower-class members like practical objects because of their lack of economic capital and economic security. Similarly, classes have different habits, that is, unconscious generative schemes or internalized ways of dealing with the world, depending on their previous experience, that is, their material condition of life, life-chances, social trajectory, and degree of economic security (Bourdieu [1972] 1977, p. 21); for a critique, see Heran (1987).

11. DiMaggio (1987) provides useful conceptual devices for analyzing the formal properties of cultural hierarchies. Building on Blau (1977), he distinguishes four formal features of artistic classification systems; differentiation between genres, hierarchization by prestige, universality of classification systems among groups, and degree of ritualization of boundaries. On the formal properties of systems of classification, see also Schwartz (1981); Zerubavel (1988).

12. Data on television time concerned with literature, drama, and the arts indicate a greater interest in high culture in France than in the United States, with two to three times as much broadcast time for the arts in France (Clark 1980).

13. Grignon and Grignon (1980), Hebdige (1979), and McKenzie and Silver (1968) make the opposite argument for France and Great Britain, arguing that popular cultures are relatively autonomous from mainstream cultures. This argument does not run counter to the tight-boundedness thesis if the differences between class cultures are clearly defined.

14. DiMaggio and Ostrower (1987) argue that because American Blacks participate in high culture, American society has a single cultural standard, that is, high culture is a dominant form of cultural capital universally valued across groups. I believe that the question of universality of standard can better be answered comparatively, by looking at the degree to which, for instance, high culture is diffused in loosely and tightly bounded cultures, and how important it is as a type of high status signal in relation to other types of signals.

15. Based on 37 in-depth interviews conducted in the fall of 1987 with randomly chosen middle- and upper-middle-class respondents living in middle- to upper-income census tracks in Indianapolis. The sample comprises liberal professionals (7), cultural and human service professionals (7), sales professionals (e.g., including stockbroker, marketing specialist) (5), upper-level managers (6), private entrepreneurs (5), and other types of professionals (accountants, professional recruiters) (7). DiMaggio (personal communication) suggests that character is not used as an alternative normative standard to cultural taste. Instead, cultural taste serves to trigger attributions about character. While this argument makes sense prima facie, the influence of cultural taste on status attribution seems to vary considerably between loosely and tightly bounded cultures; and should be studied empirically.

16. Bloom (1987) and Hirsch (1987) illustrate this dramatically when they discuss the low level of cultural literacy of the American youth. In an ongoing study, I am attempting to estimate the place of high culture in the American upper-middle class across regions (East Coast, West Coast, Midwest, and South) and between occupational groups. Existing research suggests that Easterners value high culture more. For instance, the Coleman and Rainwater (1978) survey of perceptions of class in Boston and Kansas City found that interviewees in Boston are more likely to cite academics as an example of a high status group than interviewees in Kansas City, who tend to cite independent businessmen more frequently.

17. Many sociologists who have studied class structures consider the following groups to be members of the upper-middle class: college-educated independent professionals, business people, and salaried managers and professionals, business people, and salaried managers and professionals. Researchers have also used various income levels to delimit the upper-middle class. Coleman and Neugarten (1971, p. 259) describe the literature on operational definitions of the upper-middle class.

18. Figures on the size of the upper-middle class in advanced industrial societies are not available. However, data on the new middle class, which includes professional and technical workers as well as managers and administrators, shows that this class is larger in the U.S. than in most advanced industrial societies. The new middle class comprises 22.2% of the labor force in the United States, 23% in Sweden, 18.9% in U.K., 15.9% in West Germany, 15.7% in Japan, 14.4% in France and 7.2% in Italy (data for 1968, 1970, or 1971, cited in Burris 1980).

19. Three-quarters of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs budget goes to the Direction Generale des Affaires Culturelles, Scientifiques et Techniques which is responsible for the diffusion of French culture and the French language. French cultural diplomacy has the explicit goal of increasing national prestige (Tovell 1985).

20. Kalberg (1987) provides an interesting analysis of German and American distinctions between "insiders" and "outsiders" which is also informative in this regard.

21. A group of American researchers are working on a comparative volume on the independent sector in advanced industrial societies. A conference on this topic was held at Princeton University in June 1988. The papers presented at the conference will be available in a volume edited by Robert Wuthnow.
REFERENCES


The Power-Culture Link in a Comparative Perspective


TOWARD A COMPARATIVE HISTORY OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Michael Schudson

Political communication can be understood as any transmission of messages that has, or is intended to have, an effect on the distribution or use of power in society. Political communication during the past several centuries refers especially to such messages directed to or coming from nation-states. It can also refer to communication in a church, a school, a family, or any other settings where power is at stake, but this essay focuses on communication to or from the state and its agencies.

This subject is unorthodox in sociology, despite the tradition of the early Chicago school that takes the centrality of communication in social life as axiomatic. The subject has been treated carefully in political science, insofar as political parties are taken to be agents of communication, but political scientists, with few distinguished exceptions, have ignored the serious study of the mass media. In the fields of mass communication research, rhetoric, and cultural studies, on the other hand, there has been plenty of attention to the mass media but little understanding of the importance of political structure and the institution of the political party in shaping the terms of discourse in which political communication of any sort takes place. My effort here, brief and schematic as it is, will be to offer an integrated account of a topic that

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