

# Swimming with Ancient Titans: Dynamics of Power and Culture in the World of Organizations

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*Graduate School of Management and Economics, Sharif University of  
Technology, Summer 2012*

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## **Description**

Power and culture are two fundamental concepts in social theory. Despite the wide variety of paradigms and interpretations that has shaped the interesting dynamics of scholarship around these concepts, they have remained central to several disciplines of social sciences for more than a century. One can argue, for example, that sociology is largely centered on the core concept of power, and anthropology is for the most part focused on the core concept of culture. The recent domains of scholarship that are attempting to understand both of the concepts in relation to each other are igniting the most sophisticated and exciting discussions of the day.

Similar to broader discourses of social sciences, organization studies have always been closely tied with understanding and studying the issues around culture and power. At the most basic level, organizations are constellations of specific cultures with their own values, interpretive frames, rituals, practices, and ethos. The uniqueness of this culture becomes evident when one compares the culture embedded in today work organizations with the culture of other domains of social life such as family, science, religion, or art. From another perspective, however, the most basic idea around which organizations are formed is the structure of power. While power struggles dominate most of other domains of social life, organization is where power relations are taken for granted and stabilized. Even at this basic and even simplistic version, one can see the interesting questions that are raised in the intersection of power and culture. How culture becomes a tool for domination (hegemony)? How power is lost or gained as culture changes? Who has the power to change culture and how? How societal power structures influence organizational culture? Etc. In this workshop, we review the most influential perspectives on power and culture, and will try to extend the existing understandings on the connection between the two concepts in organizational life. The workshop will be offered over three days and we will have three sessions every day.

## Structure and readings

### First session: Introduction

1. Sutton, R. I., & Staw, B. M. 1995. What theory is not. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 40: 371-384.
2. Weick, K. E. 1995. What theory is not, theorizing is. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 40: 385-390.
3. DiMaggio, P. J. 1995. Comments on "what theory is not". *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 40: 391-397.
4. Davis, M. S. 1971. That's interesting: Towards a phenomenology of sociology and a sociology of phenomenology. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 1(4): 309-344.
5. Rindova, V. 2008. Publishing theory when you are new to the game. *Academy of Management Review*, 33(2): 300-303.

### Second session: Foundations of culture

6. Geertz, C. 1973. Thick description: Towards an interpretive theory of culture. In *Interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*: 3-30. New York, NY: Basic Books.
7. Swidler, A. 1986. Culture in action: Symbols and strategies. *American Sociological Review*, 51(2): 273-286.
8. Wuthnow, R., & Witten, M. 1988. New directions in the study of culture. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 14: 49-67.
9. Schein, E. H. 1996. Culture: The missing concept in organization studies. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 41: 229-240.
10. Sewell, W. H. 2005. The concept(s) of culture. In G. M. Spiegel (ed.), *Practicing history: New directions in historical writing after the linguistic turn*: 76-95. New York, NY: Routledge.

### Third session: Selected influential works on culture

11. Kunda, G. 1992. *Engineering Culture: Control and Commitment in a High-Tech Corporation*. Temple University Press.
  - Chapter 1 *Culture and organization*: p. 1-25.
  - Chapter 6 *Conclusion*: p. 217-227.
12. Hatch, M. J. 1993. The dynamics of organizational culture. *Academy of Management Review*, 18(4): 657-693.
13. Willmott, H. 1993. Strength is ignorance; Slavery is freedom: Managing culture in modern organizations. *Journal of Management Studies*, 30(4): 515-552.
14. Denison, D. R. 1996. What is the difference between organizational culture and organizational climate? A native's point of view on a decade of paradigm wars. *Academy of Management Review*, 21(3): 619-654.

### Fourth session: Selected recent works on culture

15. Ashkanasy, N. M., Wilderom, C. P. M., & Peterson, M. F. 2000. *Handbook of Organizational Culture and Climate*. Sage.
  - Helms Mills, J. C., & Mills, A. J. *Rules, sensemaking, formative contexts, and discourse in the gendering of organizational culture*: p. 55-70.
  - Yoko Brannen, M., & Kleinberg, J. *Images of Japanese management and the development of organizational culture theory*: p. 387-400.

16. Sørensen, J. B. 2002. The strength of organizational culture and the reliability of firm performance. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 47(1): 70-91.
17. Morrill, C. 2008. Culture and organization theory. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 619: 15-40.
18. Vaisey, S. 2009. Motivation and justification: A dual-process model of culture in action. *American Journal of Sociology*, 114(6): 1675-1715.

### Fifth session: Foundations of power

19. Dahl, R. A. 1957. The concept of power. *Behavioral Science*, 2(3): 201-215.
20. Emerson, R. M. 1962. Power-dependence relations. *American Sociological Review*, 27(1): 31-41.
21. Habermas, J. 1977. Hannah Arendt's communications concept of power. *Social Research*, 44(1): 3-24.
22. Knights, D., & Willmott, H. 1985. Power and identity in theory and practice. *Sociological Review*, 33(1): 22-46.
23. Lukes, S. 2005. *Power: A radical view (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)*. London: Macmillan. P. 14-39.

### Sixth session: Selected influential works on power

24. Clegg, S. R. 1989. Radical revision: Power, discipline and organizations. *Organization Studies*, 10(1): 97-115.
25. Clegg, S. R., Courpasson, D. & Phillips, N. 2006. *Power and Organizations*. Sage.
  - Chapter 4 *The curious case of Max Weber*: p. 94-110.
  - Chapter 7 *Power to and power over*: p. 190-227.
  - Chapter 8 *The Foucault effect*: p. 228-265.
  - Chapter 13 *The futures of power?* p. 363-407.

### Seventh session: Selected recent works on power

26. Clegg, S. R. & Haugaard, M. 2009. *The Sage Handbook of Power*. Sage.
  - Engelstad, F. *Culture and power*: p. 210-238.
  - Clegg, S. R. *Managing power in organizations: The hidden story of its constitution*: p. 310-331.
  - Courpasson, D., & Dany, F. *Cultures of resistance in the workplace*: p. 332-347.
27. Levina, N., & Orlikowski, W. J. 2009. Understanding shifting power relations within and across organizations: A critical genre analysis. *Academy of Management Journal*, 52(4): 672-703.
28. Thomas, R., Sargent, L. D., & Hardy, C. 2010. Managing organizational change: Negotiating meaning and power-resistance relations. *Organization Science*, online publication: 1-20.
29. Reed, T. 2012. Masters of the universe: Power and elites in organization studies. *Organization Studies*, 32(2): 203-221.

### Eighth session: Linking culture and power through Bourdieu

30. Emirbayer, M., & Johnson, V. 2008. Bourdieu and organizational analysis. *Theory and Society*, 37: 1-44.
31. Swartz, D. L. 2008. Bringing Bourdieu's master concepts into organizational analysis. *Theory and Society*, 37: 45-52.

32. Dobbin, F. 2008. The poverty of organizational theory: Comment on: "Bourdieu and organizational analysis". *Theory and Society*, 37: 53-63.
33. Golsorkhi, D., Leca, B., Lounsbury, M., & Ramirez, C. 2009. Analysing, accounting for and unmasking domination: On our role as scholars of practice, practitioners of social science and public intellectuals. *Organization*, 16(6): 779-797.
34. Friedland, R. 2009. The endless fields of Pierre Bourdieu. *Organization*, 16(6): 887-917.

### **Ninth session: Linking culture and power through institutions, discourse, and identity**

35. Fligstein, N. 1987. The intraorganizational power struggle: Rise of finance personnel to top leadership in large corporations, 1919-1979. *American Sociological Review*, 52(1): 44-58.
36. Alvesson, M., & Willmott, H. 2002. Identity regulation as organizational control: Producing the appropriate individual. *Journal of Management Studies*, 39(5): 619-644.
37. Rao, H., Monin, P., & Durand, R. 2003. Institutional change in Toque Ville: Nouvelle Cuisine as an identity movement in French gastronomy. *American Journal of Sociology*, 108(4): 795-843.
38. Lawrence, T. B., & Phillips, N. 2004. From *Moby Dick* to *Free Willy*: Macro-cultural discourse and institutional entrepreneurship in emerging institutional fields. *Organization*, 11(5): 689-711.
39. Armstrong, E. A., & Bernstein, M. 2008. Culture, power, and institutions: A multi-institutional politics approach to social movements. *Sociological Theory*, 26(1): 74-99.

### **Recommended extra readings:**

- Grant, D., Hardy, C., Oswick, C., & Putnam, L. 2004. *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Discourse*. Sage.
- Knights, D. & Willmott, H. 1999. *Management Lives*. Sage.
- Swartz, D. 1997. *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*. University of Chicago Press.
- Butler, J. 1997. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories of Subjection*. Stanford University Press.