I. Power

A. Traditional idea

1. def: capacity of person or group to realize desired interests even against the resistance of others (Weber)

2. assumptions

a. person/groups can identify interests

b. person/groups with different and conflicting interests

c. person/groups can act individually or collectively

d. person or group can gain/maintain power in society

3. power and society

a. shape and control social institutions to further interests/ maintain power

i. economic

ii. political

iii. ideological

iv. legal

v. military

b. marginalize, control or eliminate opposition

4. means

a. force

b. legitimation

i. propaganda

ii. ideology

c. institutional subversion

d. “producing subjectivity”

i. post modern (Foucault)

ii. compliant subjects

iii. domination = freedom

B. Traditional Theories of Power: Pluralist, Power Elite, State

1. Pluralist

a. power

i. fluid, not concentrated

ii. decentralized

iii. power is legitimate (consensus)

iv. no one person or group

v. compromise

b. public has power

i. electoral process

ii. interest groups to shape public opinion

iii. lobby

c. institutions are neutral

d. conventional wisdom: US

i. representative political system

transparency, accountability

parties

elections

ii. competitive economy

iii. open educational system

iv. free press

2. Power Elite (C. Wright Mills)

a. society governed by elite triumvirate

b. hold command positions

i. political system: president, high level cabinet officials

ii. economy: corporate owners and directors

iii. military: leaders

c. cohesive= common outlook

d. make “trunk decisions”

i. major foreign policy and domestic decisions

ii. decisions frame debates and possibilities

e. other institutions shaped historically by power elite

i. education

ii. media

3. State autonomy theory

a. government is predominant power

b. “state”

c. monopoly on the use of force

d. defense

e. regulation and taxation

f. power over corporations

C. Two other theories

1. Domhoff: class domination theory

a. economic elite (corporate community) has power in U.S.

i. core composition: managers and owners of large corporations

ii. combined economic and social class

iii. cohesive community

common economic interests

common social experiences

social interactions

b. evidence

i. who rules?

ii. who wins?

iii. who benefits?

c. how: control political system through power networks

i. special-interest process: lobbyists, trade associations

ii. policy-planning process: foundations, think tanks

iii. candidate selection process: campaign financing

iv. opinion-shaping process: PR firms, media

2. Institutional or structural theory of power (Chomsky)

a. power is impersonal, embedded in institutions

1. institutions are governed by internal logic

c. agency constrained by logic of institutions

d. dominant institution: corporation

e. internal logic of corporation: maximize return on investment for shareholders.

f. creates a system of power relationships: constellation of power

D. Constellation of power

1. Center: Wealth and Power

a. capitalist class

b. 500 largest corporations

i. institutional logic

ii. size

iii. concentration of ownership

iv. constraints

1. power: control over institutions

i.economic

ii. political

iii. media

iv. law

v. military-industrial

1. interests

i. lower taxes

ii. privatization

iii. deregulation

iv. expansion

v. wealthfare

2. Control economic system

a. labor

b. means of production

c. market

d. communities

3. control the political system (“power networks)

a. campaign financing

b. lobbying

c. appointments (revolving door)

d. benefit

i. wealthfare

ii. deregulation

iii. privatization

iv. “bailouts”

4. own mass media

a. corporate owned

b. advertising sponsored

c. concentration of ownership

d. benefit: power to frame social discourse

i. controls information

ii. controls ideas

iii. experts

e. benefit: advertising

i. subjectivity is constructed

ii. compliant subjects who experience domination as freedom

iii. branding children and the triumph of consumerism

iv. “I buy therefore I am”

5. education

a. underfunding

b. gatekeeping: knowledge and class

c. devaluing knowledge and intelligence

d. social construction of ignorance and passivity

6. judicial/criminal justice system

a. judges

i. campaign financing

ii. lobbying

iii. appointments

b. laws

c. two cj systems

7. military-industrial complex

(military-industrial-intelligence-security complex)

a. allocation of resources

b. weapons contractors

c. security contractors (2003/3,512; 2006/116,000)

c. “empire of bases”/ benefits of war

d. . privatization

8. (new element) Christian right

1. economically: aligned with interests of capitalist class

b. politically: aligned with Republican party

c. what power do they have?