

Chapter Objectives

- Learn how anthropologists study political relations in different societies.
- Discuss the role of power in human societies.
- Explore societies where the exercise of power is roughly equal.
- Examine societies that sharply divide the powerful from the powerless.
- Consider how individuals manage relations of power within their own social groups.

Role of Power in Society

- **Political anthropologists** study the role of social power in human society.
- **Power** represents the ability to transform a given situation.
- Power cannot be reduced simply to physical force.

Role of Power in Society

- Power in society operates according to principles that
 - Are cultural creations affected by history
 - May differ from one society to another
- **Social power** affects an entire social group.

Role of Power in Society

- **Modes of social power** consist of
 - *Interpersonal power*: ability of one individual to impose their will on another
 - *Organizational power*: how individuals or social units limit actions of others in particular social settings
 - *Structural power*: controls the allocation of social labor and organizes social settings

History of Political Anthropology

- **History** of political anthropology has been divided into three phases:
 - “*Formative*” era (1851-1939): initial anthropological commentaries on politics
 - “*Classic*” era (1942-ca. 1971): associated with British social anthropology rooted in functionalist theory
 - *Modern Era* (1970s-present): involved cross-cultural studies of political institutions

Political and Economic Anthropology

- **Political and economic anthropology** are closely linked.
- Many political struggles concern access to material resources.
- **Economic** practices cannot be fully understood until they are related to **political** settings within which they are deployed.
- A range of subsistence strategies are used in different political contexts.

How Do Anthropologists Study Politics?

- Western thinkers assumed that without a state, social life would be chaotic and viewed people as *free agents*.
- **Free agents** pursue their own self-interests and do not cooperate unless forced to do so.
- Discussions of power as coercion see political activity as competition between free agents and political force.

How Do Anthropologists Study Politics?

- Anthropologists demonstrated that power is exercised both by coercive and by persuasive means.
- Societies without states rely on social obligations to restrict individuals from pursuing their own self-interest to the detriment of the group.
 - Individuals cannot be coerced but must be persuaded to cooperate.
 - Individuals can resist conforming to another's wishes.

What Are Domination and Hegemony?

- **Domination** represents coercive rule.
- People accept coercion by others because of *ideology*.
- **Ideology** is a worldview that justifies the social arrangements under which people live.
- Marx argued that rulers use ideology to portray domination by the ruling class as legitimate.

What Are Domination and Hegemony?

- Gramsci argued that coercion alone is rarely sufficient for social control, distinguishing coercive domination from hegemony.
- **Hegemony** involves the persuasion of subordinates to accept the ideology of the dominant group by mutual accommodations that still preserves the rulers' privileged position.

What Are Domination and Hegemony?

- **Hegemony** is never absolute and always involves challenges.
- **Counterhegemonic**, or alternative cultural practices, can be developed by subordinate groups that threaten hegemony.

What Are Domination and Hegemony?

- Subordinate groups may create counter-hegemonic accounts of their experience of being dominated, acquire a following, and unseat their rulers.

What Are Biopower and Governmentality?

- **Biopower**, or biopolitics, are forms of power preoccupied with bodies, both the bodies of citizens and the social body of the state itself.
- Sexual and reproductive conduct of individuals are seen as interconnected with issues of national policy and power.
- Statistics are used to manage people, goods, and wealth within a state's borders.

What Are Biopower and Governmentality?

- **Governmentality** involves using information encoded into statistics to govern in a way that promotes the welfare of populations within a state.
- Individuals or groups may attempt to evade or manipulate governmentality.

Hidden Transcripts

- **Hidden transcripts** are unofficial accounts of experiences by dominated individuals or groups.
- Transformation of hidden transcripts into counter-hegemonic discourse may discredit the political establishment.

How Are Immigration and Politics Related?

- **Citizenship** can be divided into legal citizenship and substantive citizenship.
- **Legal citizenship** is defined by the state and may be difficult for migrants to get.
- **Substantive citizenship** are defined by the actions people take, regardless of legal status, to assert membership in the state.