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A THEORY OF POLITICAL ANALYSIS UTILIZING POWER-BASED MATRICES

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

The Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Florida Atlantic University

Boca Raton, Florida

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This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor, Dr. Gerard Huiskamp, Department of Political Science, and has been approved by the members of his supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of The Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

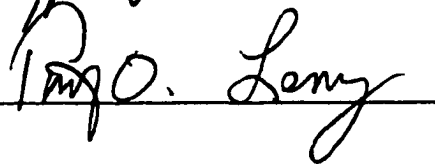
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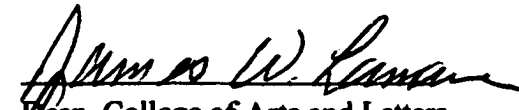
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ABSTRACT

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The existing literature regarding political power, hegemony, and mass-elite relationships could benefit from the utilization of a common theoretical framework. Such an approach calls for the synthesis of extant theories of political power into a theoretical structure that is easily translatable across various systemic contexts. Most political structures are to an extent power-based and hierarchical. The analysis of these power-laden structures is an important component of both political theory and political action. This thesis uses three cases studies to illustrate that these structures are commonplace and to explain certain aspects of their creation and destruction. The chief goal is to critically analyze whether these power-laden structures are compatible with democracy, defined as government according to rule by the people.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Political power can be defined as the ability of one group or individual to compel specific behavior upon another group or individual.¹ This goal is accomplished through various means of coercion and consensus building. Coercion means the direct or implied threat of physical force to modify behavior. Consent includes, but is not limited to, the process of developing like-minded dispositions in others via the dissemination of ideological propaganda. This thesis will primarily focus upon aspects of consensus building as it relates to political power.

Clarissa Hayward refers to this definition of power as “the central intuitively understood meaning” of the term, and links its origin to Robert Dahl’s early examinations of power and how it functions in society.² Fundamental to Dahl’s initial analysis is the conceptualization of power as an instrument or tool used by groups to modify the behavior of others. This implies a view of power as interactions where “A exercises power over B”. This “power over” approach shall be the sole interpretation of the concept utilized in this work. In subsequent years, Dahl’s concept of power was greatly expanded

¹ Scott, J. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, pg. 29.

² Hayward, C. “De-Facing Power” *Polity*, Fall 1998.

upon by power theorists to include “structural” notions that claimed the exercise of power resulted more from the mobilizing effects of enduring social roles, routines, and peripheral influences, all of which served to augment the view of power exercised by certain agents over others.

Hayward critiques this approach to conceptualizing power in her 1998 work, “De-Facing Power,” in which she argues for a concept of power as a network of social boundaries that limit fields of possibility. While Hayward’s arguments possess some merit, the intent of this work is not to further conceptualize the many dimensions of how political power is expressed. Instead, I seek to examine the notion of political power as it relates to hegemony and mass resistance, and to offer tools to enhance the analysis of these specific ideas. Therefore, this examination will utilize a structuralist approach in its elucidation and use of power-related concepts and terminology.

It is the existence of enduring social roles and routines that lend themselves to the support of elitist or power-rich institutions, and thus hierarchy. I utilize this approach to the concept of power because it is thought to be the most readily compatible with several political theorists who have examined the nature of mass-elite relationships.³ That is to say, those political scientists who have examined the concepts of hegemony and mass resistance acknowledge that political power, like most other resources, is distributed unequally in society and thus our political systems are invariably hierarchical in structure with a relatively few power-rich elites congregated at the apex and a larger pool of power-

³ i.e. Gramsci, Putnam, Scott, et. al.

deprived masses below.⁴

I will proceed by first listing the underlying assumptions of this work, along with the conceptual foundations for the arguments laid out here. Next, I will review the work of two of these theorists, drawing attention to similarities and differences in their approaches. The three case studies that are used to support the dynamics of the theoretical model are 1) the development of anti-trust laws as an element of U.S. economic policy in the latter part of the 19th century and the New Deal era; 2) British colonialism in India; and 3) civil rights in the U.S. from Reconstruction to the modern civil rights era.

These particular case studies were chosen because each possess characteristics of social power relations which elucidate aspects of the theoretical concepts I am attempting to convey here. Finally, I will examine the implications of this argument for democracy and university core curriculum. More specifically, I will address what the role of democracy is in such power-laden systems, and how university curriculum can assist in greater understanding of political phenomenon by focus more upon the concepts of power.

Questions regarding the morality or origin of this hierarchical method of social arrangement will not be addressed here as we are concerned solely with an analysis of the implications of this state of affairs and not its underlying cause. Nor do I claim to offer a theory applicable to the examination of all power-laden systems. Instead, what I offer is intended to be viewed as a useful tool to assist in the conceptualization of some political

⁴ e.g. Putnam, R. *The Comparative Study of Political Elites*; Tarrow, S. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*; Scott, J. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*; and, Gramsci, A. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*; et al.

phenomenon occurring in such systemic contexts.

Extant theories inquiring into the nature of political power frequently focus their analyses of social structures upon the two basic aforementioned groups-- masses and elites. The elementary nature of this dichotomy is commonly expounded by a number of researchers within the field of power studies and often forms the basis of theories by many political scientists concerned with the question of how we as humans are organized into civic collectives.⁵ Because it permeates every aspect of relations between subordinates and superiors within a political system, the utilizations and implications of power as it relates to mass-elite behavior are critical aspects of any political analysis and deserve a rigorous review and critique.

Yet oddly, as central as power is to the study of politics, some introductory American government textbooks omit the topic completely.⁶ This absence of discussion on such a central topic amounts to a "loud silence" and underscores the importance of this and other works addressing power. What will emerge from this review and critique is intended to be a useful tool for the analysis of certain power-laden structures utilizing the common characteristics of pyramidal, power-based hierarchies.

At this point, let us introduce into this dichotomy of masses and elites the element of ideology. Political theorists have long claimed that ideology, or a coherent set of views or beliefs, represents the motivational heart of many political movements and acts.⁷ It can

⁵ See Gramsci, Mosca, Scott, et. al.

⁶ e.g. Fiorina, M.P. and Peterson, P.E. *The New American Democracy*, 1998; Janda, K., Berry, J.M. and Goldman, J. *The Challenge of Democracy*, 1997; and, Lasser, W. *American Politics*, 1996.

⁷ Martin, J. *Gramsci's Political Analysis*, pg. 58.

be the desire to forward an ideology that will often lead groups or individuals into the exertion of political power. Thus, power in the political sense is seldom exercised without some form of ideological end goal, even if this goal is as simplistic and banal as authoritarianism or totalitarianism.⁸ Assuming that elites are rational, self-interested individuals and because elites possess a preponderance of political power vis-a-vis their position within the hierarchy, it is logical to assume that elites would attempt to forward an elite-specific ideology which would be at least *potentially* contradictory to those held by the masses.

The Assumptions of this Work

My primary assumption is that all political interactions are ideologically driven and politically power-based, occurring in an often hostile environment where few, if any, actors can be considered true political equals.⁹ I shall support this assumption by first establishing a definition of politics which specifically references political interactions within the key concept of hierarchical power structures. This will serve to focus our discussion onto some of the concrete, tangible aspects of power-laden systems.

In such an environ, opposing parties meet and attempt to forward their own goals

⁸ While this stance may allude to a radically idealistic view of political power, it should be noted that many ideologies can often serve as vehicles for the implementation of more materialistic goals, i.e. Marx's view of government in capitalist society.

⁹ In the context of this statement, political interactions are defined as those interactions between groups or individuals whose chief goal is the promotion of an interpretation of reality, or world-view. Ideologically driven refers to the ubiquitous presence of ideology, or coherent sets of values/beliefs, within the actors involved in such political interactions. True political equals are defined as two groups or individuals whose political power (or ability to compel others to subscribe to a world-view) is equal. This is asserted to be a highly unlikely circumstance in a hierarchical political structure.

and ideas at the expense of all others. Due to the dynamics of such relationships, I further assume that political ideologies are inherently non-cooperative in nature. When these ideological forces come into conflict with one another, they are forged into compromise to some or no extent and redirected in their efforts towards the common or mutually agreed to goals.¹⁰ I will utilize a system of mathematical vector-based representations to illustrate these dynamics.

The preceding assumption regarding the nature of ideology means that the core values of *individuals* remain unchanged and undiluted despite the failure of this personal ideology to surface in group dynamics.¹¹ That is to say that while individual values and beliefs may become molded and diluted when expressed as a component of group ideology, contemporary social scientists support the view that individual self-interested behavior does remain intact within groups, and may even contribute significantly to the process of cooperation.¹²

The next section of this paper will analyze specific components of this conflictual view of politics, specifically concentrating upon the concepts of vectored social interactions within a power-laden political framework resembling a political power matrix, or set of ordered social power “values.” It is argued that the structure of all human

¹⁰ Compromise may not exist in those purely antagonistic scenarios involving what could be termed, “ideological polar opposites.” In these cases, a fundamental incompatibility prevents any hope of meaningful compromise. A prime example of such polar opposites may be the two sides of the abortion debate, whose mutually exclusive ideologies are not compatible at any level.

¹¹ Core values in this context are defined as those individually held values that distinguish the member from the group. It is asserted here that no group member’s value system agrees completely and totally with all stances of the group.

¹² Olson, M. *The Logic of Collective Action*, pg. 34.

societies inevitably leads to hierarchization based, in part, upon the ability to compel individuals. Under this assumption, politics and political phenomenon exist as the by-product of certain inter-relations between different elements or tiers within such a model. Most importantly, I will seek to provide three relevant case studies from several various contexts, each demonstrating the hierarchization of power and the eventual deconstruction of these social structures due in part to the process of coalition building. Sample political power matrices for several scenarios will be extracted from case study material, and will bear out the essential commonalties of each example.

The concept of the political power matrix is an attempt to provide a conceptual model for hegemonic theories of power relations within political systems, and the discussion to follow will attempt to demonstrate that the theory holds true for a myriad of different political cultures and does not fail to account for the unique particularities of each individual circumstance. While this work does not claim to address all the particularities involved in power-based structures, a viable starting point will be offered.

I will also briefly examine the role of power and institutions in democratic political systems. More specifically, the concept of power hierarchies calls into question the validity of what we call democracy. With a ubiquitous hierarchical social structure, can a form of 'popular rule' really exist? I will demonstrate that democracy in its classic sense of popular rule is little more than illusion. Specifically, I intend to demonstrate how a mass vs. elites dichotomy is transferred through institutional settings via democratic political activity. What upon the surface purports to be a system of rule in which the citizenry determines the composition and values of the political leadership, is in fact a

power matrix in disguise—a system of rule which circumvents overt exercises of elite power in favor of more subtle elements of persuasion and consent in line with the precepts of hegemonic rule.

It is political institutions such as the aforementioned elements of democratic tradition that receive the bulk of analysis today, but the role these institutions play within elite vs. masses power struggles is fundamentally similar across cultures and societies. While institutions are worthy of some consideration, concentration upon institutions in political science is focusing primarily upon the tangible results or effects of political phenomenon and not the underlying causes. It is argued that an epistemology of politics, or our understanding of what is ‘knowable’ in the realm of political science, requires some allegiance to the concept of power and how it affects human behavior.

The final section will set forth a myriad of policy prescriptions from these findings in an attempt to reform the spirit and direction of the political science community. Chiefly, the current political science university curriculum will be examined to reveal whether or not present day practices of rote memorization of western civic history reinforce a skewed view of the nature of political relationships by presenting an unbalanced view of social behavior throughout history.

Overall, this work seeks to elucidate the concept of power within political studies by further refining the conceptualization of its theoretical foundations. I shall do so by positing the existence of social structures resembling power matrices, and secondly by inserting the underdeveloped dynamics of coalitions into these structures. Taken together, these two minor modifications to the existing debate greatly add to the coherence of

power studies and provide a more thorough explanation of this particular aspect of reality.

Political power is commonly exercised to further an ideology. Since it can be argued that elites possess a unique ideology in opposition to that of the masses, what appears to coalesce within political systems is a method of social domination that involves at least two distinct strategies. Not only do elites maintain their position via the use of coercion upon the threat of force, but a parallel approach attempts at the same time to instill amongst the masses an ideology or belief system propagated from the ruling elites. This is a state of affairs termed *hegemony* by Antonio Gramsci, the prolific Italian communist of the early 20th Century who believed that such elite superstructures represented obstacles to be overcome by socialist revolution.

A Critique of Gramsci's Hegemony

The concept of hegemony is one of the central dimensions of Gramsci's political philosophy, particularly in his proposed theory of political action.¹³ Gramsci produced most of his writings addressing hegemony while imprisoned for attempting to disseminate his communist views within the Fascist Republic of Mussolini's Italy. Gramsci's political writings took place within the turbulent context of an Italy which had moved from unification, or *Risorgimento*, in 1861 to the establishment of a Fascist Republic in 1922. This unstable and dynamic environment, coupled with the rapid industrialization which occurred in the north of Italy, resulted in the development of a strong socialist movement within Italy of which Antonio Gramsci was a principal part.

¹³ Kiros, T. *Toward the Construction of a Theory of Political Action: Antonio Gramsci*, pg. 49.

With his arrest in 1926, Gramsci found himself removed from the details of Italian political life and was forced to turn his attentions to less specific and more systematic writings. These writing are contained within the *Prison Notebooks*, which date from February 1929 to June 1935.¹⁴ Consisting of thirty-three handwritten school exercise books and various letters, the *Prison Notebooks* do not follow any consistent narrative pattern, but instead are a patchwork of ideological statements regarding the political climate of Italy, theoretical statements about the nature of power, and criticism of other contemporary political writings.

Though disjointed and dense, his prison writings allude to a recognition of the state as being more than just the mechanical “government” instrumentation of institutions, legislation and bureaucracy. To Gramsci, the state apparatus of the early 20th Century also sought to permeate the veil of “civil society,” which Gramsci defined as those social organizations which were independent of the formal state and economic apparatus.¹⁵ These civil institutions included the Churches, schools, trade unions and other social groups whose interests were not strictly economic. It was in this realm of civil society that Gramsci viewed the state as seeking to legitimize its rule by entrenching the dominant ideology of the elites within the fabric of society.

Elites maintained their position over the masses through the exercise of coercion, based upon the mechanical state institutions and bureaucracy, and consent, based upon the masses acceptance of the dominant elite ideology within civil society. The acceptance of

¹⁴ Martin, J. *Gramsci's Political Analysis*, pg. 40.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pg. 69.

an elite ideology by the masses changes the subordinate's perception of him/herself. The subordinate's inferior position within the hierarchy becomes somehow 'just' and attempts to better one's self by moving up the social hierarchy are ended. An individual's place in society is accepted as inevitable.

This perception of a 'just' social order as a result of elite ideology is the basis of what Marxists refer to as *mystification*, or false consciousness. Thus, the state integrates previously independent social groups into the fabric of rule, further strengthening its position of authority and reducing the need for overt displays of physical coercion. It is precisely this dual approach to social domination that comprises the essence of what Gramsci defines as hegemonic rule.

For Gramsci, this two sided approach meant that Marxist revolutions similar to that which occurred in Russia in 1917 were far less likely in Western Europe. Russia, according to Gramsci, possessed a weak civil society and thus was prone to the type of Marxist revolution which directly attacked the state apparatus.¹⁶ A similar flaw was echoed in post-unification Italy under the liberal governments whose failure to entrench their ideology into the already existing civil society of Italy meant that their rule was inherently unstable and weak. Friction inevitably develops between the State and the undercurrent of civil society as both vie for legitimization amongst the masses. Left to its own, civil society evolves separate and distinct from the state and serves as a constant source of revolutionary potential against the vulnerable formal state apparatus.

This failure of the state to significantly impact civil society was not replicated in

¹⁶ Martin, J. *Gramsci's Political Analysis*, pg. 72

Western Europe, however. To Gramsci, nations like France, Spain and England were examples of states whose civil societies were profusely intertwined with the state apparatus to the extent where attempts by revolutionaries to rouse the masses into direct conflict against the state failed. According to Gramsci, the reasons for this failure lie not with the inability of revolutionaries to reach the masses, but in the masses general acceptance of the ideological tenets of the elites via the hegemonic domination of elites over institutions of civil society. Observing the contrast between the East and West of Europe, he wrote:

“In the East, the State was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relation between the state and civil society, and when the state trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The state was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortress and earthworks...”¹⁷

Gramsci's hegemony is a critical concept for those who wish to examine the nature of political power since it incorporates the needed dimension of political ideology into the equation of power. Taken as a whole, Gramsci's arguments are compelling. The concept of hegemony would appear to explain many of the deficits of classical Marxist theory, especially in regards to the state and its relationship to purely non-economic social institutions. However, the greatest shortcoming of Gramsci is that in its form it addresses largely the actions and behavior of the ruling elites. By expanding the realm of tools used to support elite domination, Gramsci tends to overlook what actions are undertaken by the

¹⁷ Hoare, Q. and Smith, G. Nowell(ed.) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, pg. 236.

masses, if any, to resist this threat.

It is quite ironic that as a socialist writer and revolutionary, the bulk of Gramsci's analysis comprises only the elite portion of our aforementioned dichotomy. His prescriptions on how the masses may eventually overcome the power of the elites are dependent upon the acts of a distinct class of "revolutionaries." It is the duty of the revolutionaries, according to Gramsci, to impart upon the masses a counter-ideology to oppose the elite ideology in the realm of civil society. Because these revolutionaries represent an outside force of intellectuals, they also could be considered to represent a form of elitism themselves. Thus, a weakness in Gramsci's argument lies in his dependence upon revolutionaries to mobilize the masses into action. In essence, this argument substitutes one group of elite actors for another--albeit a kinder, more gentle elite.

This leaves open the question of what the masses may be capable of doing on their own. What characteristics do the masses possess that allows them to maintain distinct ideologies and often overthrow the existing hegemony without the re-education efforts of outside revolutionaries? These questions were addressed by James Scott in several works including *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. Scott also presents a critique of the concept of hegemony based in part upon evidence of the past success of popular uprisings.

James Scott writes from a viewpoint of a contemporary political theorist concerned with the nature of power and is often critical of the failure of previous theories to account for the actions of the masses. The work he has produced that we shall review here is concerned mainly with the forms of resistance carried out by the masses against the ruling elites. It is logical according to Scott that if elites attempt to forward an elite

ideology that is in opposition to that of the masses, the masses will seek to resist this ideology with one of their own. This resistance is often hidden however from those who study the historical record and even the elites themselves, due to several factors, some of which we will discuss here.

Most importantly, because they are in a position of relative vulnerability within the social structure, masses cannot overtly challenge the authority of the elites. Only in circumstances of extreme vulnerability of the elites, or extreme desperation on the part of the challengers, will a direct and open confrontation from the masses emerge. In ordinary circumstances, however, subordinates have a vested interest in avoiding any explicit display of insubordination.¹⁸ Thus, no overt characteristics of mass resistance are normally visible to the elites of the system.

A second factor contributing to the hidden nature of subordinate resistance is the concept of the “official transcript.” This refers in part to the historical record of events, which naturally is a product of ruling elites. Because they seek to represent the state of affairs in the most ideal light these records are inevitably skewed to represent the elites in a manner which supports their claim to power. In addition, the record of the official transcript also signifies the failure of elites to even recognize subversive methods of mass resistance, which can often amount to a sizeable protest but goes unnoticed due to the ability of the subversive elements to remain unknown. Thus, for example, the extent of crop theft and destruction in the slave-holding United States of the 18th Century was and still is virtually unknown since this method of defiance was particularly well-hidden by the

¹⁸ Scott, J. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, pg. 86.

enslaved perpetrators.

For the above reasons, Scott's hidden forms of mass resistance often disappear in historical analysis. However, part of Scott's analysis of mass behavior against elite groups is in fact supported by the appearance of events within the historical record. Specifically, this concerns Gramsci's concept of hegemony and what Scott sees as failings of those who have misappropriated the original theory. In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, Scott comments,

"The problem with the hegemonic thesis, at least in its strong forms as proposed by some of Gramsci's successors, is that it is difficult to explain how social change could ever originate from below. If elites control the material basis of production....and also control the means of symbolic production...one has achieved a self-perpetuating equilibrium that can be disturbed only by an external shock."¹⁹

For Scott, this theoretical hyperbole is an example of the weakness of the hegemonic theory. History has demonstrated that peasant revolts and violent protests are a common occurrence across a vast array of cultural contexts. However, hegemony fails to explain adequately how such events occur with relative frequency. What are the possible reasons for this discrepancy? A Gramscian response to this challenge may allude to the failure of elites to make sufficient concessions to other rival groups within the hierarchy. Thus, the coalitions that maintain elite dominance dissolve or are of insufficient strength to withstand the force of an opposing movement based within the networks of social institutions apart from government and economics. However, this response does

¹⁹ Scott, J. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, pg. 78.

not adequately address the highly hegemonic societies of England and France, both of which have endured significant levels of peasant resistance.

Scott explains part of this discrepancy via a concept of “reactance theory” within subordinate groups. This theory holds that when threatened with force from a superior, a subordinate may eventually acquiesce, but covertly the subordinate’s negative attitudes toward the oppressor increase in step with the threats of force.²⁰ Thus, within the “hidden” transcript of mass society, the subversive acts of defiance increase and what appears in the official transcript as a perfect hegemony may suddenly face a groundswell of challenges to its authority from below.

Scott’s critique of Gramscian hegemony is convincing, at least in part. Its strongest points lie in his analysis of subordinate reactions to the overwhelming power of the elites. It is reasonable to assume that despite their disempowered state, the masses would seek to resist at every opportunity the ideological programming of the elites. It can be argued that it is human nature to resist coercion when such coercion is evident, and no amount of ideological consent-building is ever likely to blind all the masses to an unjust state of affairs.

Scott’s greatest shortcoming, however, lies in his underestimation of the ability of elites to dominate society. He argues that true hegemony could only exist in a society where,

“subordinates are more or less completely atomized and kept under close observation...In other words, the social conditions under which a hidden transcript might

²⁰ Ibid., pg 109.

be generated among subordinates are completely eliminated.”²¹

Scott commits a crucial error here in his assumption that both separation and close observation are necessary prerequisites to an effective hegemony. On the contrary, I would argue that all that is required to effectuate such control is separation and *control of information*. His own examples of North Korean and Chinese prison camps bear out the efficacy of the ability to control what an isolated person knows about the world around him or herself.

Moreover, Scott’s alleges that such a society of hegemonic elite control is little more than an “ultimate totalitarian fantasy.”²² Unfortunately, the fantasy that Scott refers to becomes more and more real with the spiraling levels of corporate mergers and acquisitions, especially in the realm of telecommunications, media, and the entertainment industry. With the inordinate amount of time individuals devote to mass media, and the increasingly small numbers of truly distinct information sources, this “totalitarian fantasy” looks more feasible every day.

Taken together, Gramsci and Scott present an interesting contrast in their approaches to the question of power in mass-elite relationships. Overall, both theorists offer compelling explanations for the behavior of groups within power-laden structures. However, Gramsci somewhat ignores the presence and effects of everyday resistance to elite rule led by the masses, while Scott tends to greatly underestimate the ability of elites to control information and ideology via hegemony. Thus, in an effort to add what is

²¹ Scott, J. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, pg. 83.

²² Ibid.

believed to be a valuable dimension to the existing debate, I shall offer a synthesis of elements from Gramsci and Scott that comprises a theoretical model of political power analysis.

Fundamentally, Gramsci and Scott both ground their arguments within the same basic theoretical structure. That is, although each theorist approaches the question of power relations from quite different perspectives, both owe allegiance to a simple, pyramidal power arrangement. In an attempt to promote greater intellectual coherence between the two theorists and other approaches to the question of political power, the development of this pyramidal power structure shall serve as the principal goal of this work.

II. REESTABLISHING AN UNDERSTANDING OF POLITICS

To augment our understanding of power-laden structures within political science, we must first clarify precisely what we mean by politics in this context. In an academic discipline overburdened with nomenclature, the political science community may be reluctant to add to the confusion by contextualizing elementary definitions such as politics. However, the utilization of a contextually specific definition can serve to satisfy the myriad of theoretical approaches within power studies through its direct applicability and could also serve to tie the various existing concepts together by producing a more coherent, functional whole. The purpose in seeking such a definition is not to narrow our focus in political studies to some arbitrary scope, but rather to propose a more translatable foundation for our concepts of understanding political power. My definition is not intended to be an exclusive one, however it should be general enough to encompass most existing fields of inquiry within power studies today.

Extant definitions of politics are embedded in a net of cultural bias, which is undoubtedly skewed toward an evaluation of western political state institutions, and thus have no place in a more translatable theoretical model of political power. This paper will

attempt to remove that bias, in part, by calling into question the validity of the central tenets of western democratic tradition and the extent to which they are actually present in modern day society. But for now, we shall attempt to define politics within our aforementioned context of social power.

Why Define Politics?

To most researchers, such rudimentary steps as defining the area to be studied would seem to be a rather elementary task. Examining the opening paragraph within a textbook of man introductory undergraduate courses will often reveal a definition of the subject of study in bold type. This simple beginning serves many purposes. Chief among them is to acclimate the student to the aspects of nature we will be examining. A more exhaustive purpose is to serve as a “heads up,” or signal flare, alerting otherwise disinterested minds to the activity which flurries about them often unnoticed. By defining clearly what we study, we stain the phenomenon we wish to study and track it within the maelstrom of social interactions. Thus, clearly defining politics within the context of power relations appears an intellectually warranted action.

By defining, we also commit an act of severance as well. We exclude from consideration other forms of political phenomenon in favor a more well-defined scope of knowledge. I do not purport to have chosen the perfect point of definition here. While there is no painless way to commit this act of intellectual estrangement, it is nonetheless necessary.

Others have drawn the lines at different points within the realm of human behavior. Classical Greek views of the human condition elevated politics to the level of master discipline over all lesser subjects. It was considered to touch upon all aspects of life and social pursuit, from the home and familial relationships, to the relationship between the state leadership and the law. For Aristotle's purposes, there was little reason to view any social relationship outside the context of politics.²³ He believed all social relationships to be natural constructs, and the state (as formalized by governments and laws) simply represented the final, logical extension of this natural social integration. Even well into the eighteenth century, politics as a field of study separate and distinct from philosophy, history and economics was non-existent. Higher education in this period was confined to small, sectarian colleges where, as a capstone course, students would enroll in courses entitled "moral philosophy" or "moral science."²⁴ These courses sought to fulfill the classical Greek view of political studies by providing a synthesis of intellectual pursuits for the purpose of developing coherence and meaning to academic pursuits such as history, philosophy, ethics and literature. Woodrow Wilson, himself a political science educator, echoed this sentiment when he observed that "nothing which forms or affects human life seems to me to be properly foreign to the student of politics."²⁵

Aristotle's and Wilson's overarching science of human existence seems a bit incongruent with modern trends towards intellectual specialization, although the spirit of

²³ Aristotle. *The Politics*, pg. 25.

²⁴ Ricci, *ibid.*

²⁵ Wilson, 1911.

the desire to unify what can often be radically differing opinions upon the definition of politics is admirable in its effort to provide a 'capstone' or perspective for all knowledge which came before. However, this work will attempt to reign in this overarching definition of politics by utilizing analysis based solely upon aspects of social power—that is to say, politics defined as the examination of the effects of power in a social context.

David Ricci laments the loss of a broad view of political science, which he calls “the great conversation” on the nature of good, justice, etc. He notes that in the modern university system, specialization is valued over generalized concepts.²⁶ Ricci argues that the impetus towards scientific inquiry within political science has led to the proliferation of “little conversations” regarding particularities such as research techniques. He also questions the ability of political science to be a *true* science when the subject of study consists of social and moral beliefs. This argument leads the question of what methods of research ought to be present in modern political science.

While Ricci may be correct in many of his criticisms, I would argue that scientific research does have some valuable features to offer political science and to jettison all the precepts of scientific inquiry due to an incompatibility of our subject areas is premature. Indeed, several aspects of scientific methods could contribute to the efficacy of research within political science. Chief amongst these are the accurate communication of information in an open, peer-like setting, and the ability to share information across sub-fields using a common means of communication and terminology. These abilities have

²⁶ Ricci, *Ibid.*

proved invaluable to scientific research, since it enhances one's ability to isolate and identify seemingly disparate phenomenon as fundamentally similar.²⁷ The addition of such characteristics to political science via a theoretical framework would be a great benefit.

Political scientists must, however, recognize the limits of a social science. As A.C. MacIntyre argued in his 1971 work,

“The study of political culture, of political attitudes, as it has been developed, seems to rest upon the assumption that it is possible to identify political attitudes independently of political institutions and practices.”²⁸

MacIntyre here suggests that it is impossible to have a concept of politics which owes no debts to the institutional arrangements from which it develops. According to MacIntyre, there is a difficulty in defining politics outside the context of political institutions. Politics is simply a result or outgrowth of the institutions and practices which surround it, and any attempt to separate the concept of politics from institutions will result in a fragmented product.²⁹ This work agrees that the particularities of a political culture are indeed inherently tied to the institutions with which they interact so intimately; often, the two often become confused and blended together in political theory.

From a critical perspective, however, MacIntyre's argument focus upon political attitudes and beliefs instead of what may be considered political events or actions. The

²⁷ Salmon, Wesley. *Causality and Explanation*, pg. 69.

²⁸ MacIntyre, A.C. “Is a Science of Comparative Politics Possible?” *Against the Self Images of the Age: Essays on Ideology and Philosophy*, p. 262.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

assertion made here is that the key to understanding political power lies not in the cataloging the sources and motivations of individual political attitudes (a truly dizzying task), but instead in the clear identifying of those *social interactions* which can be said to have a *political* component. Thus, we can continue an inquiry into the nature of these interactions and derive from them some truth claims regarding the nature of power-based social interactions on the mass (or macro) level.

In order to establish a theoretical framework that avoids the pitfalls posited by MacIntyre, the concept must not be based upon any particular institutional construct, but upon social structures or roles common in human organization and collective behavior. But how are we to combine all these varied forms of political phenomenon into one cohesive theoretical structure? One solution could be to analyze such phenomenon as inter-relations within one single matrix, or an ordered set of values embodying a theoretical political blueprint. This framework would provide a theoretical basis of political inquiry by isolating those elements that relate to social power relations and mapping them in a way that provides a common means of interpretation and analysis of elements of hegemonic rule present within a variety of political systems.

How do we define political power?

For our purposes here, the mathematical method of vector addition will be utilized to visualize (in a limited, two-dimensional sense) political interactions. For example, Figure 2 on page 35 represents a sample vector-based visualization of a political

interaction involving two distinct ideologies. Within the mathematical model, a given vector represents two qualities of physics, momentum (taken as mv , or mass multiplied by velocity) and direction upon a two-dimensional plane. The longer the vector, the greater the momentum, and hence, the greater the impact upon other vectors with which it may intersect.

In our political model, the length of each vector represents a group's social power, and direction represents a commitment to a unique ideology. Precise interpretation of these vector-representations of political interactions are matters of measurement and shall be taken at their current face value, so I shall leave questions of proper measurement and orientation to others. Therefore, Vectors A and B in Figure 2 represent social forces with particular political beliefs and motivations seeking to enact their beliefs at the expense (if necessary) of all others.

When an impasse, or point of contention is encountered, vectors are intersected and compromise (or cooperation) is required to produce a new vector, which is the revised political goal of the synthesis of A and B. The new vector is a coalition, and carries the politically charged goal resultant from group dynamics. This process serves as a method of information exchange across social agents and is, put simply, a representation of political interaction. The new vector's direction represents the revised *group* ideology produced as a result of compromise and cooperation, while the vectors length represents the relative strength of the group's coalition.

It is axiomatic in modern state systems that the rulers are fewer in number than the

ruled. Political power, like other social goods, is distributed unequally.³⁰ One obvious implication of this rule is that it leads us to societies with pyramid-like political structures, with a tiered elite few (I believe one would be hard-pressed to find a society with a single, individual 'elite in hominem') whose numbers diminish as one moves up the power scale. And attached to this, a mass public whose more numerous, less power-enfranchised population is pooled at the base of the pyramid.

While lengthy arguments will (and should) erupt over the justice of such a state of social affairs, few researchers would argue that this is not the current, prior, and most likely future state of affairs for human society. Egalitarians seek truly noble goals for society. However, the balance of history weighs in heavily on the side of unequal distributions of power. Therefore, we will take this inequality as given and the subsequent pyramidal power structures as inevitable.

Again, power in this context could be defined as the ability to compel individuals or collective decision-making and is distributed unequally. Thus, that we as individuals have more or less power than others is axiomatic.³¹ It is this statement that forms the foundation for political stratification, which refers to the separation of groups or individuals into distinct, exclusive political classes. As an integral part of their claim to superiority, ruling classes adapt styles of behavior and etiquette that serve to distinguish them as sharply as possible from the lower classes.³²

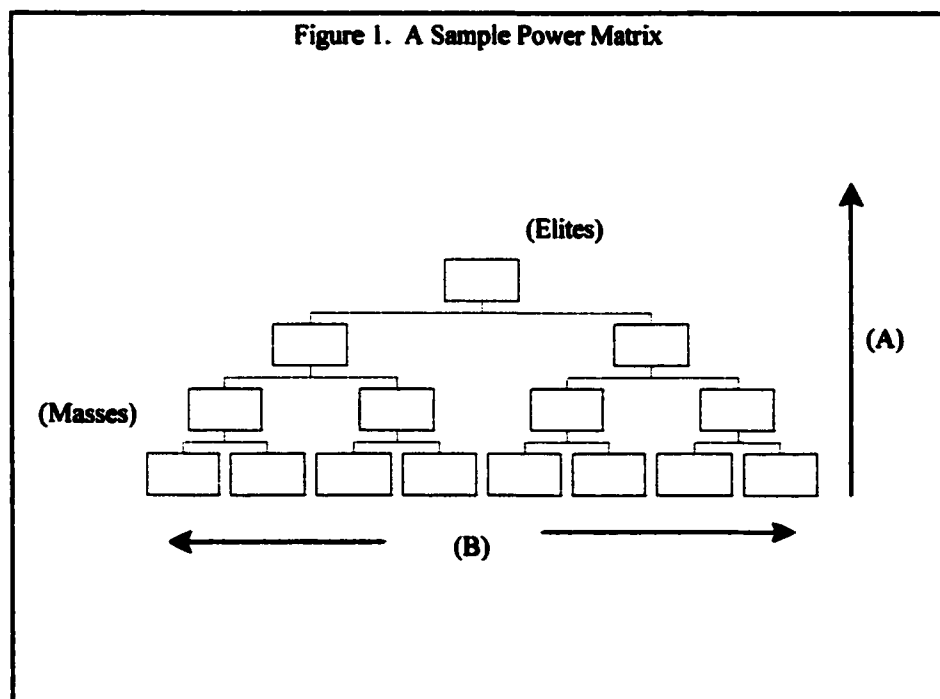
³⁰ Putnam, R. *Comp Study of Pol Elites*, pg. 2

³¹ Ibid.

³² Scott, J. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, pg. 133.

However, elites are tied to the masses (and vice-versa) by a variety of institutions, practices and customs that seek to provide a necessary level of communication between the two groups while allowing a minimal amount of inter-group mingling, association or mobility. It is through this formalization of relationships and mutually acknowledged (if not accepted) boundaries or buffers that the form of the pyramid-like structure inherent in political power relationships is maintained.

It is this line of reasoning which leads us to the basic form of our theoretical framework, but such pyramidal structures are hardly new to political science. Robert Putnam, James Scott and others developed similar models of political stratification resembling pyramids. But let us take the basic model we have established here a step further. If political stratification is indeed the inevitable result of the imbalance of political



power, then it can be argued that many political systems can be dissolved or decanted down into some basic form resembling a pyramidal power structure of elites and masses. Therefore, at some level of analysis, the pyramidal structure can serve as a theoretical representation of power relations within a number of political systems. If this is so, then the examination of pyramidal-shaped social structures may serve as a useful tool for political analysis.

Resembling an organizational chart in its most elementary form, these hierarchical structures would represent the political dynamics within any given system. As shown in Figure 1 and stated above, the process of political stratification results in tiers of ever increasing political power. The boxes are taken to represent individual political actors, with elites occupying the apex of the pyramid and the masses pooled below. The lines between the various boxes represent the various linkages which connect elites to the masses i.e. institutions, practices, etc. The vertical arrow (A) to the right of the chart represents an increase in political power as one moves up the hierarchy.

The left and right arrows (B) at the base represent increasing distance from the dominant ideology of the elites. As one move further from the center ideology, one's beliefs are increasingly fringe or radical. Although not necessary to maintain the intellectual coherence of the model, one could simply imagine leftist ideologies on the left and rightist conservative ideologies fanned out to the right of the apex. At the extreme left would lie pure Marxism, and at the extreme right would lie Fascism. However, any ideological dichotomy would suffice to illustrate the point and the overly simplistic left-right ideological dichotomy is by no means a perfect horizontal representation.

Due to the nature of elites, the numbers of individuals also decrease as one moves up the power scale. Thus, the pyramidal shape represented in Figure 1 achieves a crude representation of the theoretical concept—a more accurate representation would be far less symmetrical and uniform. Because these structures involves sets, or matrices, of political actors ordered and arranged by relative power within a closed system, I shall refer to them hereinafter as political power matrices.

Political Power Matrices and Perceptions of Social Reality

There are two underlying assumptions regarding our proposed framework of political power matrices. First, as implied by the name, it is assumed that all political phenomenon are inherently power-based associations. That is to say, that the existence and exertion of social power is a necessary pre-requisite for any sort of political dynamic.

A second fundamental assumption addresses perceptions of the organizational nature of human behavior. As stated before, a power-based theory of political science asserts that the nature of human social systems is inevitably hierarchical. Although they may protest to be flat, horizontal entities with power being distributed equally amongst all members, all organizations possess elites.³³ For example, universities have their academic department heads, college deans, provosts, and presidents. Naturally, corporations have division heads, department directors, chief operating and executive officers. Political parties have party functionaries, local coordinators, state directors and national chairmen.

³³ Farazmand, A. *Modern Organizations*, pg. 35.

Many social groupings obey this basic structure, with possible exceptions coming from those organizations whose characteristics do not meet the first fundamental assumption regarding political phenomenon (i.e. exercise social power). This would apply to purely leisure organizations, whose sole purpose was the pursuit of activities of a trivial or recreational nature such as sports, hobbies, etc. Because they fail to meet our first requirement for political phenomenon since these activities do not seek to produce an exertion of social power, I shall exclude these organizations here.³⁴

Models involving elite dynamics are not entirely new. The mid- to late 19th Century brought the first realization by many political theorists that power is inevitably hoarded amongst an elite few.³⁵ Events of the time precipitated this world view, led perhaps most notably by the rise in industrialization and the monolithic businesses which emerged from the factory towns. As corporations merged into even larger and larger organizations, it became readily apparent that power, like other social goods, is distributed unequally. Concepts of social Darwinism also owe much of their beginnings to this period, in which hard work and honesty were said to be the only requirements for unlimited success. The truth, in actuality, was quite different. Social Darwinism was an unlicensed mutation of Charles Darwin's Theory of Natural Selection and sought to legitimize the station of the elites (and the masses) during the industrial revolution by attributing their success (and failures) to some inevitable natural circumstance (i.e.

³⁴ Note however, that many traditionally leisure activities can acquire political overtones and thus be transformed into organizations seeking exert social power. An example of this may include the fervency of some European soccer fans, whose enthusiasm often belies nationalistic sentiments.

³⁵ See Gramsci, Marx, Mosca, Michaels, Villfredo, et. al.

mystification, or false-consciousness). It was this philosophy of social Darwinism that served to buffer the elite groups from the masses by turning public attention away from appalling social conditions and gross inequities of wealth, and focusing it instead upon more palatable work and social obedience ethics.

In this period as in others, elites tended to be homogenous, unified and self-conscious groups. As rational individuals in a society, elites sought to maximize their own self-interest, which by definition meant taking measures necessary to exclude the vast majority of the public from joining their ranks. In order to secure their position for as long as possible, elites self-perpetuated through a variety of institutions of privileged education and professional opportunity.

Democratic government, as practiced today in modern representative systems, purports to provide the public with the power to choose their policies via elected officials. While in theory, this may appear a prime example of a relatively flat, horizontal government power structure, the reality of the democratic process is tied to institutions again controlled to a large extent by elites. Access to and membership in these institutional policy-making bodies is governed by a most fundamental characteristic of elite populations—relative wealth. While the masses are not completely silent in such a democratic system, the opinions of the mass public can easily be swayed in a multitude of directions with an adequate exertion of elite power. This is well documented by a number of political scientists whose research shows that the control of major sources of information (i.e. news media, publishing, etc...) provides unparalleled opportunity to sway

mass opinion by deciding what information is known and who knows it.³⁶ Add to this the undisputable influence gained via political campaign contributions and our democratic power matrix begins to build significant vertical component.

As in our prior example, the function of institutions in democratic forms of government can be likened to a buffer, filter, or “smokescreen” which serves to protect and insulate the elites from the passions of the masses. By establishing processes, representatives, and traditions, these elite groups enable the funneling of mass opinions and impulse into a more manageable, controllable stream. Other forms of government utilize more or less overt buffering tools including the military (primarily in dictatorships), royalty status (in monarchical systems) and religious station (in Islamic states).

With the confluence of mass publics and elites, a hierarchy is formed. In social science research, elites have been shown to be an inevitable product of any social grouping or government form. Robert Putnam citations evident in his 1976 work, *The Comparative Study of Political Elites* that suggest that not only formal governments, but the military, intellectuals, journalists and religious leaders all possess a relatively homogeneous leadership of elites.³⁷ This is viewed by Putnam as a natural result of differing levels of ability, opportunity or awareness.

Take note, however, that this diversity of capability may at any time become an asset or a liability depending entirely upon the traits which are considered valuable at the

³⁶ See Converse, P. *The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics*, 1964.

³⁷ Putnam, R. *Comparative Study of Political Elites*. Pg. 26

time. A group of individuals trapped in an elevator, for example. Let us say our imperiled group includes the following occupations: a secretary, the CEO who manages the building, a police officer, a mechanic, and an elevator repairman. Outside our elevator tragedy, one may reach a conclusion regarding who is an elite and who is further down the power-pyramid. However, inside our broken elevator, there ought to be little question how easily this hierarchy can shift given a change in the value of certain traits. Even the mechanic, possessing limited knowledge of elevator mechanics but a wealth of general mechanical intuition, carries more traits which lend themselves to elitism in this scenario than say, for example, the CEO. Thus, the preceding conveys a sense of how the contextual framework within which political interactions take place is such an integral part of our revised theory for political science.

The pyramidal organization in Figure 1 is associated with power since the vertical component of the structure is comprised of ever increasing tiers of political power, or the ability to compel. The horizontal dispersion of the boxes represents differences in ideology as group moves further away from the central elite tiers to the more radical fringes. These fringe groups, whose weak base of support leads them to inevitably congregate near the base of the power structure, are by definition peripheral and marginal due to their ideological distance from the elite-dominated center.

Because it is assumed that some have more or less power than others, fringe groups are inherently power-weak. Dominant power begets a dominant ideology, and fringe groups are forced into more desperate, radical actions to counter-balance this

position.³⁸ Researchers have made this claim often before, and literature shows us it is not entirely unnatural to exist in such a state. A group of rational, self-interested elites will always seek to maximize their own benefit at the expense of others. In this model, it is likely that individuals will seek the accumulation of power and organizations will therefore become increasingly vertical with time and less horizontal.

But how do we explain the success of popular revolutions, civil disobedience and other forms of protest orchestrated by the fringe groups against the power-wielding elites? By virtue of their position, elites within our hierarchical power structure can withstand most individual challenges to their position. Thus, what is necessary for success is the formation of coalitions. By this I mean direct, conscious and deliberate action towards a horizontal structure, or diffusing of power. This action will only be successful if it involves the focused exercise of a preponderance of power, which overwhelms the sitting elites. If our pyramidal model is accurate, this preponderance of power would most readily come from a coalition. Research by social scientists has demonstrated that the concept of coalition building is not incompatible with the rational self-interest precepts that have been outlined earlier in this work.³⁹ Thus it is quite possible that coalitions of various groups may occur frequently in political systems.

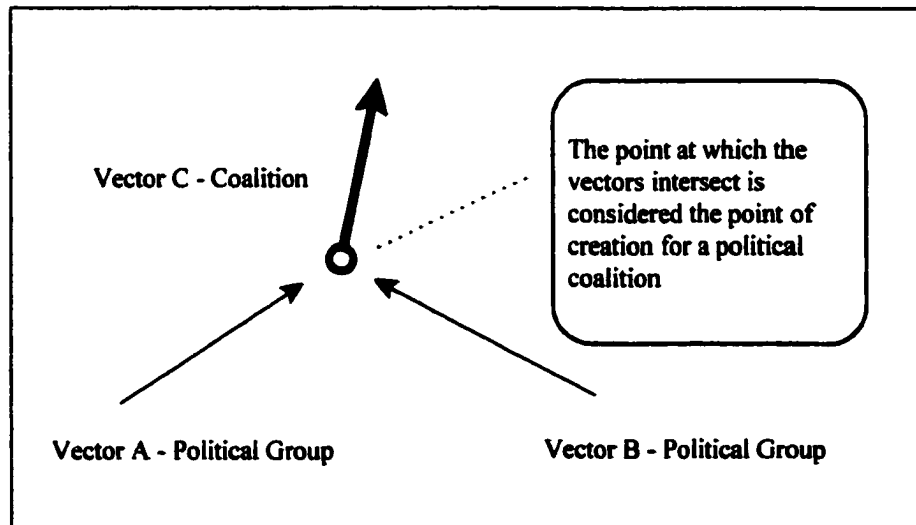
Figure 2 demonstrates how the formation of such coalitions can be represented (in an admittedly limited, two-dimensional sense) by the process of mathematical vector addition. That is to say, Vectors A and B represent two particular homogeneous political

³⁸ Putnam, R. Ibid.

³⁹ See Axelrod, R. "The Emergence of Cooperation Amongst Egoists".

groups. Their direction indicates a devotion to a particular political ideology. Their length represents the relative force or strength of the movement's ideological conviction. The point of their intersection could be best described as a point of political contention.⁴⁰ As was asserted, rational self-interested individuals seek to promote their goals above all others. Therefore, groups whose conflicting ideologies set them on such a "collision course" face the inevitable process of coalition building if they wish for the attainment of higher positions of political power. As Figure 2 represents via the process of vector addition,

Figure 2. Vector-based representation of political coalition building



the process of coalition building results in a new, more energetic Vector C, but one with an ideological direction whose focus has changed. Thus, the creation of a coalition necessarily results in the compromise of some ideological elements in favor of energizing some remaining shred of what individual members consider valuable.

⁴⁰ This "political contention" may take the myriad of forms for which political expression is privy, including debate, protest, voting, war, civil disobedience, and others.

ability to control the dissemination of information is one method of interpreting the vertical component of these matrices.⁴¹ The communication must be reliable, frequent and data-intense because methods of effectively exerting control via information require a preponderance of “information force.”⁴²

So therefore, where we see the absence of such levels of communication, we can expect to see “breaks” in the political power matrix and subsequent “sub-matrices” forming as a result.⁴³ These breaks represent discontinuity in the hierarchy of the social structure and are opportunities for the formation of new elite groups. These newly formed sub-matrices and their respective elites may possess relatively less power than the structures that they are disconnected from, but they are insulated from the hierarchical effects of the mother structures due to the lack of effective communication.

Although resistant to change, the political power matrix is only a theoretical “snapshot” representation of a dynamic political system, and the placement of individual actors within the various tiers is by no means permanent or static. Nor do these positions and actors need to be as firmly defined as our box chart diagram implies, for the theory to be

⁴¹ Elites at the apex of our structure may possess the ability to literally decide what is known by the masses at the base. Intermediate levels within the structure may be limited to the capability to “spin,” or reinterpret and recast, particular existing information to their benefit.

⁴² See Scott, J. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, for his account of methods of control utilizing information in North Korean and Chinese prisoner-of-war camps, as well as the slave-holding South and other contexts. These situations required that communication be of a relatively intense nature.

⁴³ Interestingly, if such a theoretical model is considered valid and communication capabilities were advanced and comprehensive enough, the political power matrix concept could theoretically extend unbroken into all levels of human interaction. All individuals would be linked into a single, global pyramidal power structure, resulting perhaps in a rather Orwellian existence of complete and total global population control. However, I shall leave such rampant speculation to fiction.

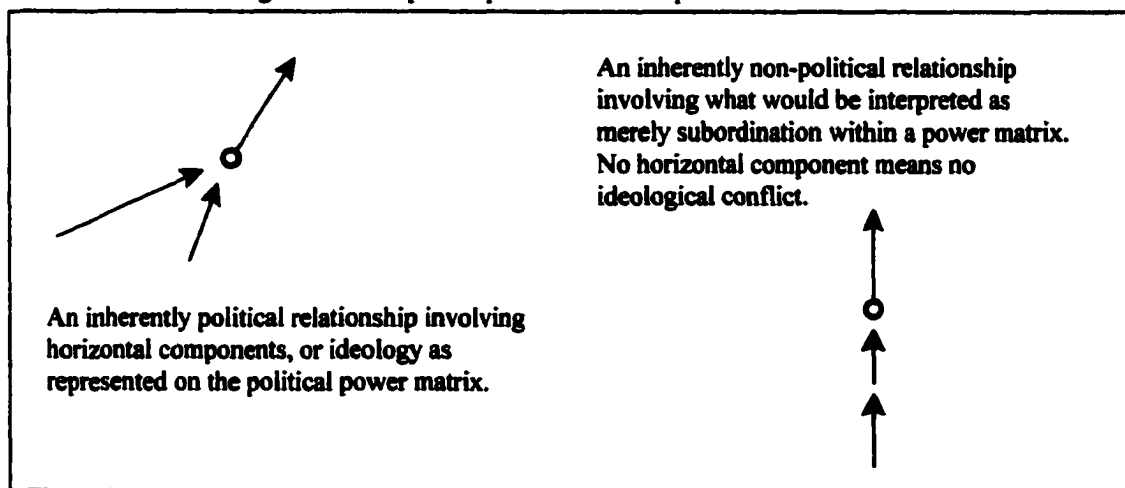
extracted from this model depends not so much upon discrete units, but more upon general vectors or directional aspects of relationships across the various tiers and branches. In this light, perhaps the political actors depicted by boxes in our Figure 1 would be better represented by indiscrete “smudges” or “regions.” However, for appearance’s sake, we shall utilize the more easily representable form.

Note also that the political power matrix depends solely upon communication to exist, as politics is inherently a social phenomenon. Power, authority, or the ability to compel are considered to be the vertical axis of the theoretical structure itself, and are viewed as the vertical component of vectors representing varying methods of communication along the various branches and tiers of our structure.

Political relationships in this scheme could be represented by vectors drawn between various tiers and branches of our theoretical structure as in Figure 3. However, in order to be considered a political act or relationship, vectors would require a *horizontal* component as indicated in the left hand side of Figure 4. The pyramidal structure we utilize all possess a horizontal component to their structures, which as we alluded to before is representative of varying degrees of ideological distance from the central elites whose dominant power position places them at the apex of the pyramid and the center of the ideological spectrum. When viewed within the backdrop of a power matrix, the horizontal components to vectors involved in coalition building represent a forced realignment of political goals. Note again that when we refer to power in this matrix, we refer to a mutually acknowledged power—acknowledged (if not accepted) by all actors involved. Without the necessary horizontal component of political interaction, the

relationship in question devolves into a matter of subordination (or insubordination as the case may be) as reflected in the right hand side of Figure 4. The relationship portrayed here is between an acknowledged political subordinate and a superior. For example, the relationship between unorganized labor and organized trade unions. One set of actors possesses an overwhelmingly superior amount of political power than the other, therefore unorganized labor exist as clearly subordinate to the will of organized labor.

Figure 4. Examples of political and non-political interactions.



These purely *vertical* relationships are fundamentally non-political, or *apolitical*. This is so because the relationship involves no attempts by elites to alter or affect change in a group's or individual's perception of social reality. If overlain upon the political power matrix model, such as the vectors in Figure 3, purely vertical vectors would indicate a relationship between a superior and a subordinate with no hint of ideological distance (or horizontal shift). Purely vertical relationships cannot represent an elite's attempt to legitimize his or her own authority, since a position of absolute power (which

would be indicated by a purely vertical relationship) requires no legitimacy to exist or operate.

As alluded to before, ideas of such matrices are not entirely new. David Ricci utilized a historical “mid-twentieth century liberal matrix” to elucidate his concept of the conditions and mindset from which many subsequent policies and world views evolved.⁴⁴ Although Ricci’s matrix referred to a collection of core values and beliefs, the concept we shall introduce here is not entirely dissimilar. However, Ricci saw matrices as sets of beliefs and opinions which were cyclical in nature. The mid-Twentieth Century Liberal Matrix is what Ricci uses to refer to the nearly unanimous acceptance of the New Deal and the economic and social policies which developed from it. The introduction of the “liberal” matrix represented a new cycle in an ongoing process of ideological shift. However, we remove any cyclical elements from our matrices, and also any ideological dynamics, since our goal is a useful methodological tool for understanding political interactions and not an explanation of ideological transformation.

Antonio Gramsci also utilized a hierarchy to elucidate his view of social relations between elites and the masses. Particularly relevant to our discussion here is Gramsci’s use of hegemony to identify a condition of social control. Because part of the goal of this work is to be conversant with Gramsci, we base our matrices upon the hierarchical nature of power within social relations. The emphasis upon the analysis of particular social power roles may provide our definition with a common, translatable calculus of power.

⁴⁴ See Ricci, D. *The Tragedy of Political Science*, 1984.

When we integrate this theoretical power-laden framework into our definition of politics, what might the final product look like?

As developed by our preceding discussions here, let us say,

Politics consists of social interactions within a power matrix that seek to affect changes in human belief and/or behavior. These changes result specifically from shifts in the individual's (or group's) interpretation of social reality.

Therefore our definition depends upon a novel key element-- the concept of political power matrices, which refers to the necessary social structures which permit group or individual activity to create political dynamics. The justification for the existence of such structures and their ubiquitous presence in mass social behavior will be borne out in the following case studies. Each seeks to examine different aspects of mass behavior, and how this behavior contributes to the establishment of these theoretical structures and their eventual demise. More specifically, each case is a representation of the inevitable result of human organization and the implications of such results.

III. LIFE WITHIN A POLITICAL POWER MATRIX: SOME SPECIFIC CASE STUDIES

The Anti-Trust Years of 1895-1920 and the New Deal

The period of 1895 to 1904 saw the first major wave of corporate mergers in United States history.⁴⁵ Many of the corporate names still recognizable today were formed during this period including General Electric, Standard Oil and U.S. Steel. Many others have changed names or have faced sale, deconstruction or outright demise. But the common element amongst all these early mergers was size. Until then, the United States and the world had not experienced the scale of big business that appeared during this period. In 1899 alone, 979 firms valued at over 2 billion dollars were absorbed into corporate mergers.⁴⁶

The reasons given for this sudden wave of mergers are varied, but they must

⁴⁵ Grady, Christopher. *The Rise of Big Business*, pg. 17.

⁴⁶ Freyer, Tony. *The Rise of Big Business*, pg. 994.

include some mention of the explosion in communications and transportation technology that came with the advent of the telegraph and railroad. These two technologies meant that firms could now market goods nationally and create larger, more complex multidivisional organizations. Before the appearance of these technologies, the firm's size was constrained by the practical limitations of slow or non-existent communication and transportation networks. With these new tools, firms saw limitless opportunities for growth and market exploitation.

These new organizations created as a result of advances in communications and transportation technology possessed highly specialized sections where authority was decentralized and specific tasks were coordinated through a planner or director. This ability to decentralize authority led inevitably to larger and larger organizational structures, as firms found it in their benefit to create middle management and multiple tiers of authority within their offices.

Multinational corporations also came into prominence during the early 20th Century. Initially, these were created as a response to foreign trade tariffs and protectionists policies which put solely intra-national firms at a competitive disadvantage. The larger multinationals could use "in-country" producers to undercut the prices of solely intranational firms and balance these losses with price hikes elsewhere. The initial multinationals were largely an outgrowth of informal international consulting and representation arrangements, in which domestic producers relied on consultants overseas to be their "person on the ground." However, multinational firms soon discovered that exploiting their status meant access to new markets and consumers, while relocating

production facilities held the added bonus of circumventing protectionist trade policies.

With many mergers and acquisitions occurring in a relatively short period, the early anti-trust years were a highly volatile, competitive environment. And this environment led to a need for more vertical hierarchy within firms. Organizations, in a response to the market, will naturally exert a tighter control over resources in such a scenario, emphasizing the need for a clearer, more disciplined pyramid of hierarchical management. Diverse and changing environments, like those present at the turn of the century, are countervailing forces for decentralization and horizontal structures.⁴⁷ Thus, the conditions for the creation of pyramidal power-based hierarchies, similar to the example in Figure 5, were favorable.

During the depression years of 1875-1896, firms experimented with different organizational structures in an effort to take advantage of economies of scale. Mergers were only one way firms sought to achieve this goal. The creation of cartels represented an even greater threat to the fair marketplace. These new structures were a method for circumventing the legal obstacles put in place by most states which prohibited larger corporations by creating "holding companies" whose responsibility would be to hold a majority share of stock in a number of companies without owning them outright. Not surprisingly, the Board of Directors and administrative authority of these holding companies often mirrored that of the subordinate firms. Effectively, holding companies or trusts represented the next level of big business to take place in the United States.

⁴⁷ Freyer, Tony. *The Rise of Big Business*, pp. 996-7.

The combined social effects of these economic forces were severe enough that by 1890 farmers, labor and small business groups formed a coalition of left wing and right wing political ideologies to lobby for the legislation to limit the size and economic power of holding company corporations and thus prohibit outright monopolies. The policies forwarded by these diverse groups represented a patchwork of concerns, from moral objections (fairness in the market place) to purely economic issues (opposition to price fixing).⁴⁸

As a response to these concerns, the formative years of anti-trust began with the Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890. The passage of this act coincided with the still increasing concentration of business into even larger corporations, and represented the effect of an overwhelming public outcry to bring fairness to the marketplace. Its stated intent was to “protect trade and commerce against unlawful restraints and monopolies.”⁴⁹ However, the precise definition of what constituted a monopoly or unlawful restraint was made intentionally vague due to the desire of individual members of Congress to avoid direct retribution (in the form of the retraction of campaign support) from the formidable big-business lobby. For many years following the passage of the Sherman Act, this vagueness resulted in virtual inaction regarding the law, and contributed to a lengthy list of interpretive rulings from the courts.

In the interim years, the economic and social effects upon the poorest members of

⁴⁸ Specifically, the agrarian movements were a vehicle of “populism,” which sought to oppose elite interests in American society. The urban movements were a form of “progressivism” whose tenets held that promotion of the social welfare was a responsibility of government.

⁴⁹ Mueller, C. *Anti-Trust Law and Economics Review*, pg. 3.

society as a result of these giant firms have been said to be the worst since the end of slavery in the United States.⁵⁰ Child labor, dangerous working conditions, and slave wages characterized life at the ground level of these firms. The seemingly endless supply of cheap labor supplied to the United States by a steady flow of immigration provided the necessary human capital required for what was often dangerous heavy industry. Given limited options, immigrants of the day were often thankful to be given work and often considered the Social Darwinist ideas regarding hard work and reward to be genuine. However, it evident by the social conditions of the day, that the heads of industry at the time thought little about the welfare of individual workers.

The passage of the Sherman Anti Trust Act of 1890 and its companion the Clayton Act, did not by themselves result in the restructuring of political power necessary to bring about the end of the hegemony of big business. Indeed, the philosophy and practice of Social Darwinism and big business continued unabated into the 20th Century. During this period, antitrust legislation continued to be bound up by the Courts, due to the intentionally vague language utilized in the law to protect the author's from the responsibility of deciding final policy design. Ironically enough, the Sherman Act was used extensively by big business in the early 20th Century to break the power of trade unions, one of the very groups whose efforts won passage of the Act.

The Sherman Act was not fully utilized until the presidency of Woodrow Wilson, whose progressive political platform led the Department of Justice to confront one of the

⁵⁰ See Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* for a particularly horrific account of the conditions of mass labor present at the turn of the century in the U.S. Also, this reading is quite interesting in its allegations that these conditions caused a number of secondary societal effects upon families, neighborhoods, etc.

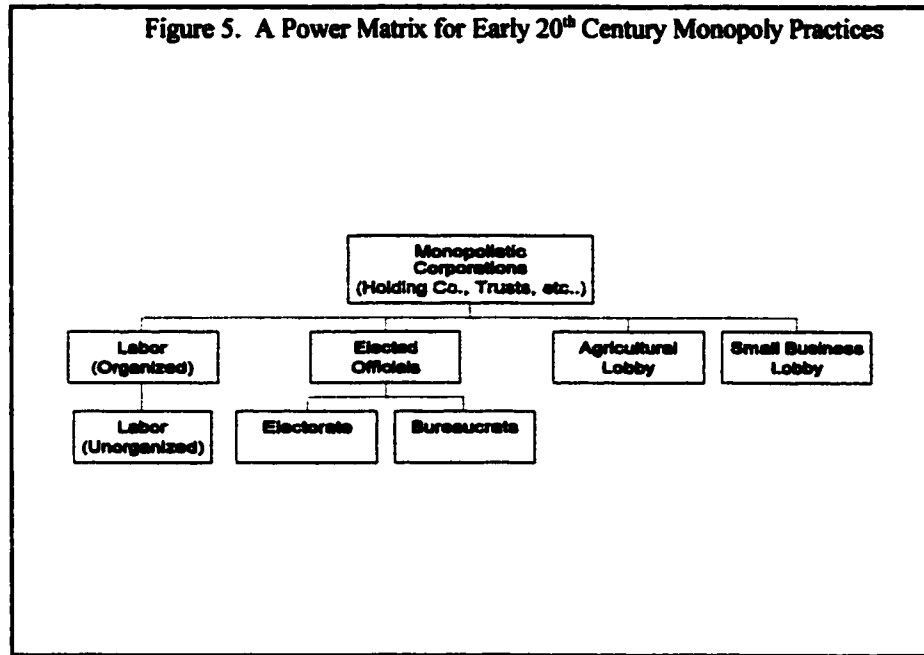
nation's largest corporations, U.S. Steel. In the *United States v. U.S. Steel*, the Justice Department alleged that U.S. Steel represented an illegal monopoly and a constraint upon the free practice of trade. Within a current cultural context that accepts the validity of anti-trust philosophy, this may seem obvious since U.S. Steel controlled between 80 to 90 percent of the market. However, the Supreme Court of the day ruled solidly in favor of the corporation.⁵¹

The ruling in *U.S. v. U.S. Steel* was largely due to the unusual constitutional interpretation of the Courts, which was applauded and supported in earnest by the business lobby. And since Congress had no explicit constitutional authority to regulate the size or configuration of private business, the Courts refused to acknowledge the legality of the Sherman Act. This state of affairs continued on into the 1920's, with the presidency of Herbet Hoover (himself a former Commerce Secretary) whose avowed philosophy was that commercial activity ought to be free from political control.⁵²

Figure 5 proposes to represent the position of big business in this period via a political power matrix. The monopolistic corporations held effective political domination over all other groups due to the inability of these subordinate groups to effectively challenge the elites. Although coalitions did form amongst farmers, labor and small businesses whose combined efforts were able to muster significant political force, their efforts produced a flawed legislative policy.

⁵¹ Peritz, R. *Competition Policy*, pg. 67.

⁵² *Ibid.*



As it was originally passed in 1890, the Sherman Anti-Trust Act can be faulted for failing to bring about the demise of the big business power matrix of this period due to its weak language, symbolic tone and lack of enforcement.⁵³ As was mentioned in the previous section of this work, what is necessary to reshuffle the political power matrix is nothing less than direct, deliberate action against the sitting elites. Sherman Anti-Trust fails this test because it was drafted to be intentionally vague in order to protect the electoral fortunes of its authors. The lack of focus led to a diffuse policy effect and squandered the momentum of the coalition, resulting in the continued concentration of wealth during the first decade of the 20th Century.⁵⁴

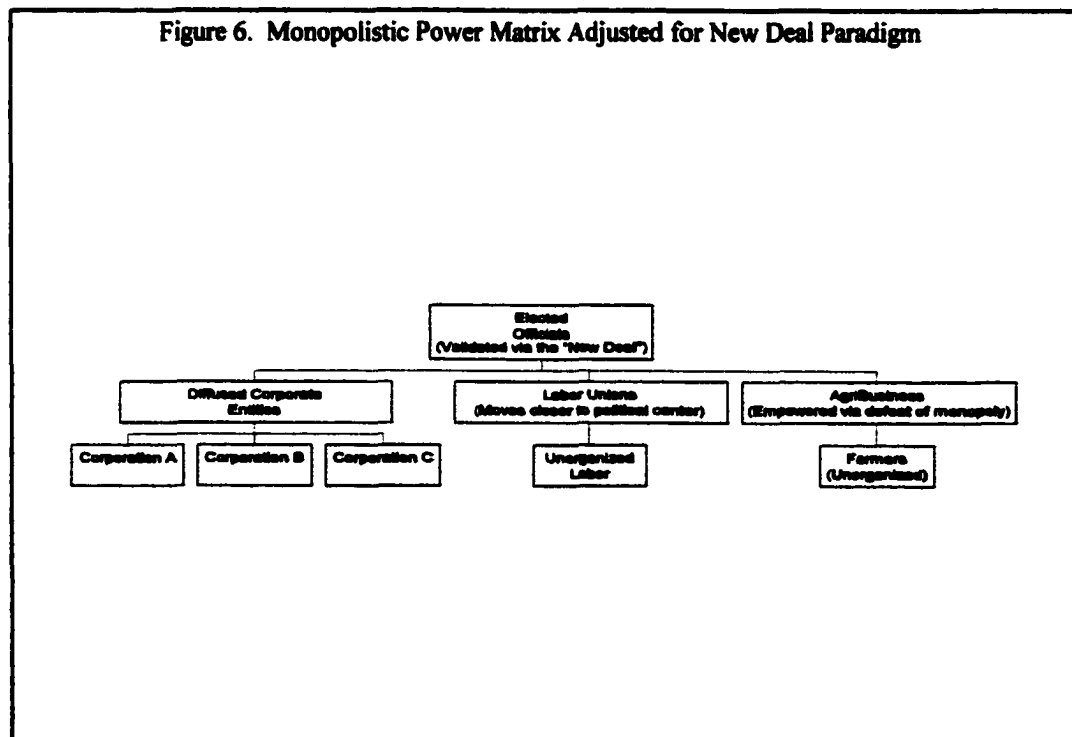
⁵³ Tindall, G.B., *America: A Narrative History, Vol. II*, pg. 883.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 974.

The common element in the political ideologies of the day was an unbending devotion to state-sponsored capitalism and the social philosophy of social Darwinism. Taken together, these beliefs made it possible to indoctrinate a whole generation into the view that business ought to be independent of any political controls. This philosophy was undoubtedly the product of the corporate giants that dominated the day and represents the manifestation of the central elite ideology. Their reign would continue unabated until the chance occurrence of a “watershed” event opened the door to a realignment of social thought regarding the place of government and business in society.

The catastrophic events of the Great Depression represented the watershed event severe enough to break the dominant paradigm of laissez-faire. With the collapse of the

Figure 6. Monopolistic Power Matrix Adjusted for New Deal Paradigm



economic and social order which supported the former view, a need for a new paradigm which could address the social conditions of the time was great. With the progressive, activist government policies of the New Deal, the United States found a viable alternative to the dominant view of the day. The New Deal ran contrary to many beliefs held for granted before, and proved to be a bitter medicine for many of the time to swallow. It accepted that economic inequality was a fundamental social problem, and not a natural state of affairs. In addition, the New Deal reframed classical liberalism to include the state's obligation to free the masses from the oppressive effects of private organizations with great economic power.⁵⁵

To summarize, the example of anti-trust represents the failure of coalitions alone to usurp a highly organized hierarchy. The giant corporations of the day effectively utilized political, social and moral grounds to defend their right to exist. It was not until the occurrence of an undeniable "watershed" event, that the political and moral grounds failed and the power of the corporations was broken. At the top of Figure 6, our matrix adjusted for the New Deal, paradigm sits the elected officials of the New Deal. Having moved up in the model, I would include both unions and former big businesses on roughly the same level. Other winners include farmers, now transforming into agribusiness. The unsteady coalition of lower tiers, combined with the "watershed events" of the New Deal paradigm resulted in the breaking of political power amongst the corporate giants of the day. In essence, the power matrix represents the end result of the exercise of anti-trust-- the reallocation of political power.

⁵⁵ Peritz, R. *Competition Policy*, pg. 113.

The British Domination of India (1760-1947)

The impetus behind much of the early European exploration that emerged with the coming of the Renaissance period was undoubtedly economic. European tastes for silks, spices, tea, and fine china fueled a desperate desire for trade routes with Asia. Scattered attempts to establish overland trade routes with the Middle East and Indian subcontinents had met with little success due to the often hostile lands which lay in between. Thus resolved, European merchants looked for trade routes by sea, first seeking to round the horn of Africa to reach Asia and the Indian subcontinent.

England, historically a dominant naval power, had the initial advantage in this pursuit. And subsequently, European trade with the India was led by fierce competition between the English and the Dutch in the early 16th Century. The two powers, however, were by no means alone; competition for markets involved the bulk of the European nation-states including the French and Portuguese. So how did the British win the prize of India in the end? More interestingly, how did the tiny island nation manage to effectively rule large portions of the populous region with relatively few soldiers in country? British rule of India reveals many interesting aspects of our theoretical power matrices and deserves some attention in this discourse.

The East India company, founded at the end of Elizabeth I's reign, was England chief economic actor in South Asia from the very beginning. A privately held company, with close financial ties to the English government, the East India Company pursued highly aggressive trade policies with the port cities of Madras and Bombay. The company

was rewarded with rapidly growing market shares and extensive commercial privileges from the British Parliament to trade in the yet untapped markets in Bengal.⁵⁶

The privileges afforded the company in Bengal raised the assurance and determination of company officials to exploit markets in the region. Feeling the weight of the British government on their side, the East India Company grew more bold in its actions to block out competition for its market, both from other European powers and native merchants. The mix of several powerful actors in a region far from European governments led to increasingly violent confrontations between the various economic interests. With complaints of tyranny, abuse and even torture arising in the Bengal region, the British government was forced to respond with action from Parliament.

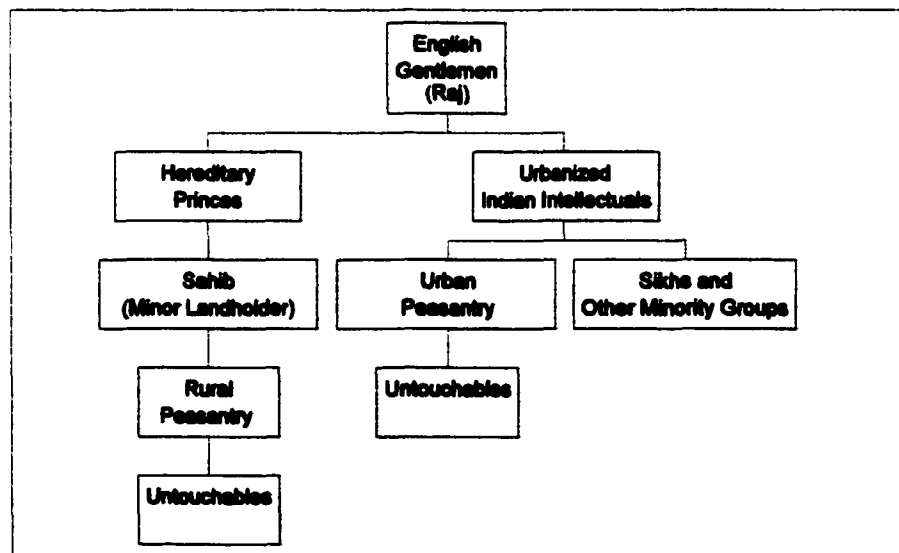
Thus, the British Parliament acts in 1757 to bring British rule into India by dispatching naval and land forces to protect the interest of British companies and citizens in India. British law, considered to follow Englishman regardless of where they may travel, is brought to South Asia via the establishment of Governors, courts and councils. In this instance, the establishment of a government apparatus in the colony follows the commerce—not a typical pattern for most imperial powers of the day. In 1759, British troops and naval vessels, paid for and under the direction of the East India Company, carry out a military campaign against the native merchants and their chief European competitors, the French. In the end, both enemies are effectively routed and the era of British domination of India begins.

⁵⁶ James, L. *Raj*, pg. 31

In terms of sheer numbers, India dwarfed her new rulers. No more than an estimated 100,000 British were present in India at the start of this era, with nearly 250 million natives.⁵⁷ Yet and still, the British managed to effectively rule large portions of India for nearly 200 years. What were the methods employed by the British to dominate such a large foreign population? And what characteristics of the native Indian population made dominance by a European power so readily achievable? The answers to both of these questions lies in an examination of a political power matrix for Indian society under British rule.

As show in Figure 7, the British occupied the position of *Raj*, or rulership, in India from approximately 1760 to 1947. For this period, they dominated over a society whose rigidly structured society made domination by a foreign power relatively simple.

Figure 7. A political power matrix for British India



⁵⁷ Ibid., pg. 154.

In reality, the vast majority of Indians never saw a European during the British rule. Over 97% of the country was comprised of illiterate, rural peasantry whose meager existence did not allow the luxury of political action or other opportunities to make their opinions known.⁵⁸

Moreover, a rigidly entrenched system of castes, or *varna*, insured that no significant change in the daily life of the common Indian would take place. *Varna* dictated that the rural peasantry would pay their allegiance to a local *sahib*, or master. This individual, usually a minor land holder, in turn paid tribute to the local prince. Thus, the nature of the caste system in India was so rigid it allowed the British to simply supercede the hereditary native Indian princes with a stock of European gentleman.⁵⁹

Note the highly vertical arrangement of the power matrix in Figure 7, especially in the rural areas represented to the left, which comprised the bulk of the population. This highly linear subordinate relationship results in social interactions which are highly *apolitical*, thus non-conducive to processes of coalition building. With the advent of British domination in India, the change in life for the average Indian peasant was hardly noticeable. Thus the British exploited the *varna* system to their strategic benefit.

Surprisingly, the British never had direct control over the entirety of India. At the height of their occupation, the British had directly rule over a population of only 23 million, mostly centered around the province of Bengal. The remainder of the country,

⁵⁸ James, L. *Raj*, pg. 341.

⁵⁹ *Raj*, *Ibid*.

chiefly the interior sections, was ruled by the local princes whose hereditary monarchy had been passed down for generations. Generally, these princes cooperated fully with the British powers on the coastal areas, due to the European's control of the key port cities and consequently, foreign trade. For the most part, however, the native princes cooperated because British domination afforded them more freedoms than that of prior rulers.⁶⁰

The methods of British colonial rule were simple and did not penetrate deeply into the daily life of India. Key administrative offices, railways, post offices and local councils were controlled by Englishmen. Notions of ethnic superiority were assumed by the British and used to justify their rule. These notions of superiority were often accepted by Indian moderates, who did little to question British authority.

Several events could be considered contributing factors to the eventual demise of British rule in India. The constant conflicts the army was forced to engage in the northern regions proved to sap morale amongst the military. Educational reforms instituted by the British had the effect of creating a new class of urban, educated Indians with nationalist aspirations. Moreover, the advent of wars in Europe weakened British resolve to hold onto its Indian possessions. In the end, however, the end to British rule in India would come as a result of all these factors coalescing around the popular uprising of Mahatma Ghandi and the "Quit India" movement of the Indian National Congress.

Created in 1885, the Indian National Congress (INC) was an amalgamation of

⁶⁰ Guha, R. *Dominance Without Hegemony*, pg. 81.

many smaller organizations scattered across India. True to form of aforementioned theories regarding coalitions, the INC sought the mutually agreed goal of developing increased autonomy for India.⁶¹ The membership of the INC was strikingly uniform in its demographics, composed of British-educated Indians whose education at Euro-centric colleges across India had implanted in them a reasonable desire for self-determination and autonomy.⁶²

Aggravating this desire was the inherent racism underlying British attitudes towards native Indians. Most British found it impossible to regard educated Indians as equals, something which the Indian found bewildering since it clearly violated many of the ideological precepts of British society.⁶³ This “ideological dissonance” represents a key aspect of what serves to motivate the masses of educated Indian society into action. Incongruous or selectively applied ideological precepts tend to expose elements of hegemonic rule to subordinates, often creating high levels of resentment and dissatisfaction with the status quo.

These factors fueled popular support amongst the educated Indians for the INC. Its power grew slowly through the end of the 19th Century and reached an apex in 1919 behind its most effective member, Mohadma Ghandi. The establishment of coalitions between the Hindu majority and the Muslim minority in South Asian was considered of

⁶¹ James, L. *Raj*, pg. 352.

⁶² British education of native Indians usually included some mention of the concepts of liberalism, freedom, and self-determination, especially as these concepts are articulated in the writings of J.S. Mill in *On Liberty* and others.

⁶³ James, L. *Raj*, pg. 348.

great importance to Ghandi, who recognized the need for the native population to present a united front against a colonial power whose classic techniques of 'divide and rule' would seek to create schisms at every opportunity.⁶⁴ Muslims possessed many separate reasons to distrust the British, who they saw as attempting to crush Islam worldwide through their dominance of Egypt and Palestine as well as their unsteady relations with Turkey.

The Muslim League, an organization representing South Asia's 90 million Muslims, was welcomed by Ghandi as an eager partner of the INC. The leader of the Muslim League, Dr. Muhammed Ali Jinnah, eventually rose to become one of the most active members at the heart of the INC and was a principal strategist in the effort for Indian independence.. Throughout his campaign to organize resistance to British rule, Ghandi shrewdly sought the approval of the masses of Muslim groups by specifically decrying historic Hindu abuses of Muslims in his public speeches. His ability to bind together Hindus and Muslims, as well as his persuasive arguments and appeal amongst the masses, made Ghandi a natural leader of a broad coalition focused upon ending colonial domination. In response to increased pressure from British elements to end independence movements, the INC instituted a policy of passive resistance developed by Ghandi.

During the early 1920's, the INC instructed Indians and Muslims to boycott official British ceremonies, remove their children from government schools, stop paying taxes, and leave their posts in government offices. The effects of these actions shook British officials in India, but did not by themselves result in the force necessary to convince the

⁶⁴ Ibid., pg. 583.

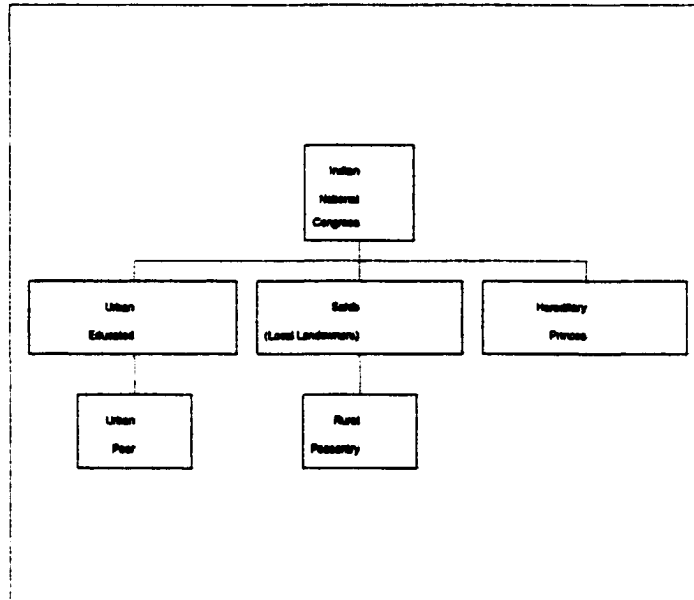
colonial power to relinquish its hold on the nation. The nearly ubiquitous compliance with these directives demonstrated to the British, however, that it was in fact the INC which had true control over India and that its rising calls for self rule must eventually be dealt with.

In recognition of this and the growing disturbances within India throughout the 1920's, London sought to appease the INC by offering increased authority to local provincial councils and the imposition of a federal constitution which would be subordinate ultimately to British authority. The tactic ultimately backfired, however, resulting in increased respect and prestige for the INC amongst the masses of Indians. Throughout the 1930's, the INC continued to escalate its passive resistance to British rule while stirring more and more of the vast Indian population into action.

Muslims during this period remained loyal to the independence movement, although many Hindus including Ghandi often expressed concern regarding the Muslim commitment to non-violence. Episodes of violence in the province of Malabar in 1921 were often aimed at both the British and Hindus. However, the constant appeals by Ghandi for peaceful protest and the lack of any national-level militancy meant such episodes were largely sporadic. In the end, it was perhaps World War II which represented the necessary "watershed" event which convinced the British to give up India. Threatened throughout the war by invasion from Japan and a large costly flank for the British Army to protect, India became a strategic liability to the Great Britain. At the

close of the war, the war-torn economy of England no longer held the desire to hold onto its imperial possessions and conceded independence to India in 1947.

Figure 8. Post-British India power matrix circa 1948



The success of the INC in convincing the British to concede India is an excellent example of the efficacy of coalition building upon the elites of political power matrices. Utilizing a talent to organize and a charismatic leader in Ghandi, the INC was able to break the power of the sitting elites by unifying Hindu and Muslim opposition and slowly sapping their resolve to dominate. The end result is the replacement of the British with the national leadership of the Indian National Congress in 1948 as illustrated in Figure 8.

True to form, upon the disappearance of the threat, coalitions formed between the INC and Muslim groups frayed quickly as each sought to reorient themselves ideologically. Quickly following the establishment of home rule in India, the nation split into Hindu and Muslim regions, with long smoldering conflicts continuing amongst the

former allies to this day.

African Americans and the South from Reconstruction to Civil Rights

The close of the U.S. Civil War in 1865 brought emancipation for the 4 million former slaves of the South, but the road ahead for these newly freed individuals was to be a difficult one.⁶⁵ The white slaveowners of the South had given up their free labor only grudgingly, and now feared the social ramifications of a large population of former servants in their midst. With such significant numbers and the right to vote established by the Reconstruction Act of 1867, African-Americans posed a serious challenge to the ruling authority of whites. In the period immediately following the Civil War, African-Americans not only voted, but took public office, acquired land, and worked as police and alderman.

Under the protection of the military governors imposed on southern states at the time, limited opportunity flourished for the former slaves. However, the period was one of great discomfort for many southern whites who recoiled at the prospect of African-Americans as a political and social force. In addition, social fears regarding the prospect of social equality and integration led many white southerners to move quickly to reestablish a social order based upon a two-class society with the gradual establishment of home rule throughout the 1870s to 1890s.

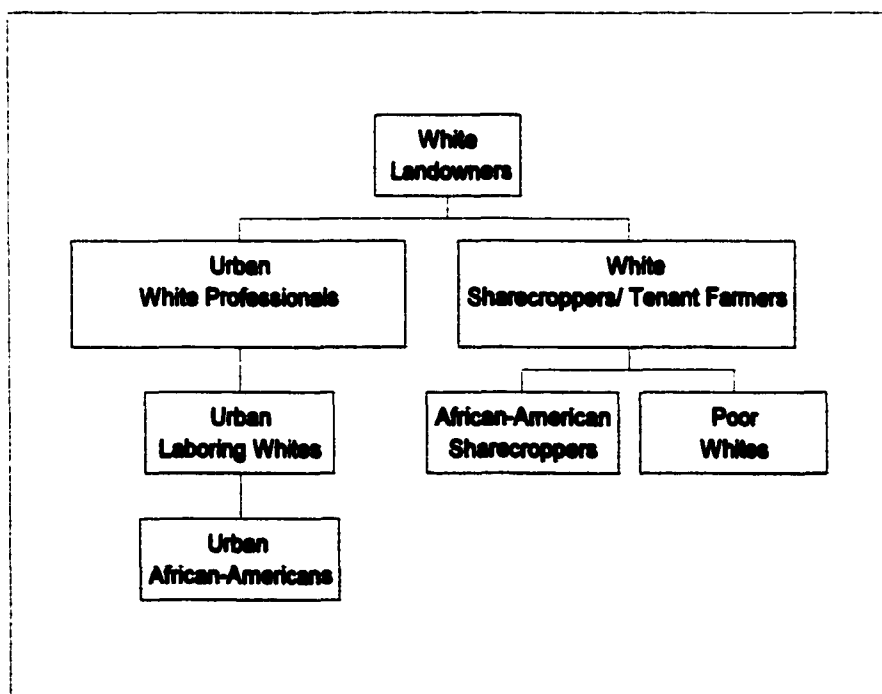
By 1876, both the Democrats and the emancipating Republican party had movements within them to end Reconstruction and return the southern states to home

⁶⁵ Franklin, J. and Moss, A. *From Slavery to Freedom*, pg. 201

rule.⁶⁶ Newer generations of Northerners grew weary of the need for a constant federal presence in the South and sought to appease the growing Democratic Party by removing troops, marshals, and Freedman's Bureau representatives. The first white southern responses to emancipation and suffrage were sporadic and violent forms of terrorism aimed at intimidating African-Americans back into a position of servitude.

Lynching, a particularly brutal form of hanging, torture and burning, grew more intense and the black vote became increasingly rare. Other less barbaric methods however, were employed and included legal and legislative maneuvers aimed at making

Figure 9. A political power matrix for post-Reconstruction South circa 1890.



⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 230

voting difficult or outright impossible for African-Americans.⁶⁷ Figure 9 represents the net effect these efforts by Southern white elites to reestablish the old order. By the turn of the century, the African-American vote had been effectively extinguished. Southern legislatures and public offices returned to whites returning them to a position of authority in urban centers throughout the South. The vast majority of African-Americans in rural areas existed as subsistence sharecropper farmers, whose obligation was to pay a landlord for the use of the land with a portion of his crops. The urban centers were seldom more promising. White employers often paid far less to black employees as opposed to whites and required black employees to live in company housing which returned yet another profit to the employer. Interracial marriage was quickly outlawed across all southern states, and “Jim Crow” laws made their appearance establishing segregation as state policy in hotels, barber shops, restaurants, and theaters.

The end result of these post-Reconstruction actions can be interpreted as the reestablishment of a pre-Civil War power matrix with wealthy, land-holding, agriculturalists whites at the apex. True to the theory outlined in our preceding sections, the power matrix itself is highly resistant to change. The attempts by northerners via the military, Freedman’s Bureau and other sympathetic parties did not present the consistent, focus force necessary to bring about a permanent realignment in Southern society. Once their transient presence had expired, African-Americans in the South discovered that the old order was simply suppressed and not extinct. It would not be for another half-century

⁶⁷ Some of the various forms this behavior took include poll taxes, vague and selectively applied educational requirements, gerrymandering of electoral districts, the infamous “grandfather” clause, the establishment of voting sites miles from black communities, and election fraud, amongst others.

that the right opportunity presented itself for a realignment of the south's power matrix. At tenets time, the impetus for change would come from within the new and growing urban African-American communities of the South.

The social isolation forced upon Southern blacks during the period of Jim Crow segregation had the unintended effect of developing the foundations for a popular social movement. Urban black community leaders, living in close proximity and in daily contact with their followers, were able to effectively gather support for initiatives without the knowledge of white leaders. Close proximity resulted in rapid communication and ease of organization. Thus when the movement began in earnest, many white Southerners were surprised at its vigor, rapidity and breadth.

Most historians agree that the civil rights movement in the South began sometime during the decade immediately following World War II.⁶⁸ Initial actions of defiance against the precepts of segregation began initially with bus transportation in cities such as Baton Rouge and Montgomery, but quickly gained momentum in other areas. Northern-based groups such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP) pursued active legal campaigns attacking the issue of segregation in the courts. And the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* decision of 1954, which ordered the integration of public schools, is heralded by many to be the first major victory in the effort to end segregation.

While the NAACP sought victory in the courts, the Southern Christian Leadership

⁶⁸ Morris, A. *The Origin of the Civil Rights Movement*, pg. 25

Council (SCLC) was organizing in Atlanta to bring about change via non-violent direct protest. Modeled on the methods of Ghandi in India, the SCLC leadership plotted to bring an end to segregation in the South via non-cooperation, peaceful protests, sit-ins and boycott tactics. These methods proved highly successful in placing a great deal of economic pressure upon the South to capitulate. The sheer numbers of African-Americans (who in some states constituted a narrow majority) meant that such mass actions inevitably created significant impacts.

Originally, the NAACP saw the growth of the SCLC as a threat to its monopoly of civil rights mobilization. In addition, there were legitimate fears that creating another civil rights organization would split valuable economic and organizational resources and hamper progress. The coalitions eventually established between the NAACP and the SCLC represented difficult efforts to coordinate mass demonstrations with legal victories. Martin Luther King, the charismatic leader of the SCLC, saw the need to allay the fears of the NAACP. He was instrumental in the establishment of the coalition and once commented,

“We have won marvelous victories through the work of the NAACP...and I [have] nothing but praise for this organization. The NAACP...has done more to achieve Civil Rights for Negroes than any other organization.”⁶⁹

Apart from rhetoric, King and other SCLC founders took out lifetime memberships in the NAACP in a demonstration of loyalty to the organization. The SCLC

⁶⁹ Morris, A. *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, pg. 126

also attempted to mitigate fears of the NAACP that its direct action philosophy would replace the legal strategy by emphasizing the need for a 'division of labor' within the movement. SCLC would focus upon community level organization and events while the NAACP took the national stage for which it was better equipped. Although tensions remained between the two organizations, the attempts to ease animosity were sufficient to prevent any overt displays of antagonism.

White southerners, determined not to relinquish their place in Southern society, fought vigorously to prevent change to the system. Legal maneuvers, legislative filibuster, direct defiance of court orders and outright violence were used to reverse the tide of change. However, the ultimate result of their response was growing violence and disorder in the South culminating most visibly in the Birmingham Riots of 1963.

Involving thousands of students, SCLC members and average citizens, the Birmingham Riots represented the culmination of a decade of political turbulence.⁷⁰ The events in Birmingham created a chain reaction across the South, resulting in some 758 separate demonstrations occurring across 168 cities. This mass disorder forced white Southerners into further acts of violence and spurred a mortified Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which legally prohibited segregation.⁷¹

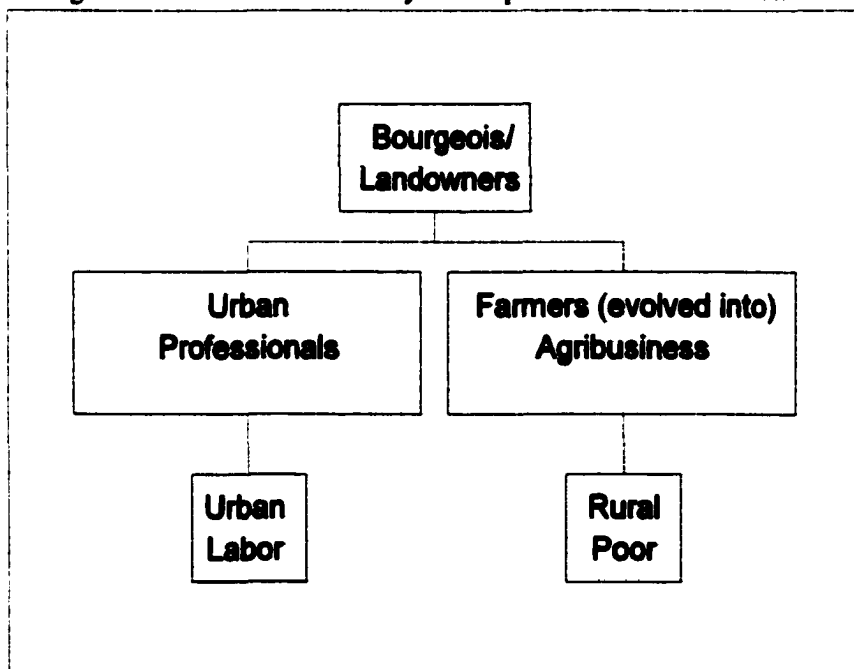
The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by no means brought an immediate end to segregation in the South, however, its passage by Congress did create the ultimate

⁷⁰ *The Origin of the Civil Rights Movement*, pg. 274

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

legal authority to do so. For that reason, we shall consider some of the power matrix for the segregationist South to be fundamentally altered upon the passage of this legislation. However, this alteration is difficult to plot since the utilization of such a theoretical model depends upon a “snap-shot” representation of a particular state of affairs at a particular time. This is not entirely possible in the instance of the Civil Rights movement since the changes brought about by this political movement are still being felt today.

Figure 10. An idealistic ethnically neutral power matrix for the South



While little may have changed to the actual form of the matrix outlined in Figure 9, the vectors of political movements are undoubtedly at work towards a more ethnically neutral hierarchy, whose eventual structure may resemble something like that of Figure 10.

In this highly simplistic representation, ethnic categories have been removed from their positions within the structure, denoting a societal evolution cognizant of the fundamental rights of individuals to enjoy equal liberty regardless of ethnic heritage.

IV. CONCLUSION

The preceding argument asserts that the nature of power in a social context is hierarchical, and this hierarchical nature of power is inevitably linked to politics through the control of political institutions. Therefore, political relationships within many systems can be theoretically represented by a hierarchal political power matrix. This allegiance to a more common structure affords political scientists the ability to assign a measure of predictability and baseline assumptions regarding the nature of some power-laden systems. To be effective, those in positions of political power over others must use their power or risk losing their place in the hierarchy to those competitors who will. This continual exertion of elite power leads to the self-perpetuating nature of such matrices.

The existence of these matrices in a variety of scenarios throughout recent history has been made evident. The common characteristic shared by all is their self-perpetuating nature. Resistant to change, those who are able to reach the apex of our theoretical structure are in an enviable position over all others. Simply waiting for time or chance trivial circumstance to bring about a re-shuffling of our hierarchical order is not sufficient.

Despite their apparent invulnerability, however, history has shown that the most vertical of structures eventually do collapse and are remade. The circumstances that precipitate this deconstruction involve the utilization of coalitions amongst the many groups near the base of the pyramid. These coalitions are often formed on an ad hoc basis, and quickly dissolve with the disappearance of the central elites which they oppose. It is this same process of coalition building that results in political compromise and cooperation in group dynamics. Thus, the process of deconstruction of political power matrices affords the social scientist an excellent opportunity to examine political phenomenon in their most elementary forms.

While true change requires the formation of coalitions, the opportunity to combine resources and social capital comes only with a “watershed event,” whose cataclysmic effects temporarily create opportunities for power change. The “watershed event” also plays a role in spurring the masses into action in response to some cataclysmic or outrageous offense. It is disturbing that such egregious offenses or events are what is required to motivate mass action.

Even more frightening in its Orwellian overtones is the natural, logical extension of this theory in the Age of Information. It is asserted in the preceding argument that information barriers represent one of the boundaries between various matrices whose pyramiding branches of influence and control extend only as far as the accurate transmission of information, or propaganda. However, with modern technology rapidly closing previously unbridgeable spans across the human landscape, the growing possibility exists for a “universal political matrix” whose all-encompassing tiers of influence extend

unbroken into every aspect of life for every individual within reach! The dire predictions implied by the preceding argument are perhaps overstated, but if the structures outlined here possess some validity, what more practical statements can be made about those existing institutions which claim to disperse power more equally amongst the masses? Chiefly, what about democracy? How are we to reconcile our hierarchial power-based reality with a form of government that purports to represent (to some extent) rule by the people?

Why Democracy?

In light of my evaluation of political power, the question of what democracy means to us is an obvious one. Why value democracy if political hierarchy is inevitable? Under such a theoretical framework, doesn't democracy represent a rather vain attempt to return horizontal control over political institutions?

The preference for democracy is an undisputable fact for the majority of political scientists. The reasons behind this presence are most likely cultural, political science largely being a result of Western European civilization. However, some research does exist to support the notion of democracy as a particularly efficient utilization of social resources. Fredrick Taylor's concept of scientific management could be molded to support the view that individuals in a political system play specific roles to which they are best suited. Taylor believed that in every system or organization, there was one best way

of performing each task.⁷² In his view, the elites of an organization ought to encourage the subordinates to focus solely on those tasks for which they are best suited. In this line of reasoning, the success of western democracy could be said to result from the competence of the electorate in making only simple “Candidate A” vrs. “Candidate B” decisions via the vote.

Democracy as Political Efficiency

Based upon the ideas I have asserted here regarding the vertical nature of social groups, the discipline of political science would seem to require some compelling rationale for the preference of democracy, or somehow abandon the cultural context of its origins and attempt to forge ahead in what will presumably be an ideological environment more closely akin the natural sciences. I believe sufficient evidence exists to favor the first option, resting the foundations of political inquiry upon a preference for Karl Popper’s concept of Open society.

The German philosopher Karl Popper put forward a powerful line of reasoning in favor of democratic forms of government when he examined the inherent differences between what he referred to as open and closed societies. To Popper, the open society represented the democratic tradition of creating greater participation in civic activities. While the closed society rested upon the reliance of the authority figure or philosopher-king, whose duty, or perhaps even burden, it was to lead the masses. In terms of wisdom,

⁷² Taylor, F. *The Principles of Scientific Management*, 1911.

it would appear that Popper's Open Society represents the most judicious choice, since open society's can depend upon a broader range of intellectual input to advise its actions.⁷³

However, while there may be some rational basis for a preference of popular democracy in light of Karl Popper's Open vs. Closed Societies, there is still the undeniable fact that many aspects of democracy have been denounced by works by the most respected students of politics, including Tocqueville from 1835, Bryce from 1888, and Ostrogorski from 1902. These individuals had taught, and were still teaching, that democracy was not as fair as had been supposed, and that to some extent it dealt very badly with the poor.⁷⁴ This may be the case historically, but it should be noted that the vast majority of pluralistic reforms undertaken to increase the role and stature of the poor have come from countries with strong democratic traditions. The chief examples being perhaps Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society initiatives and Scandinavian "cradle-to-grave" welfare states.

Other critics of the open society point to the inefficacy of democratic forms of government and their supposed dispersion of political power. Researchers such as Phillip Converse have called into question the nature of political participation in democracies. Their results have led us to believe that democratic forms of government are less an exercise in participatory government and more a competition amongst elites for the ill-

⁷³ This broader range of intellectual input is achieved by many aspects of modern democracies, including the freedoms of association, speech, press, etc. These freedoms allow for coalitions to form more easily within systems and affords greater opportunity for challenges to the rule of unjust elites.

⁷⁴ Ricci, *The Tragedy of Political Science*, pg. 105.

informed and irrational favor of the masses.⁷⁵ In such a scenario, power once again becomes accumulated at the top of the societal pyramid and reinforces elitist vs. masses views of politics.

This would appear to be a fairly cogent argument. However, it fails to point out the relative failure of other forms of government to disperse power amongst the populous. Alternative political systems, such as Communism, Monarchy, and totalitarianism have failed to a much greater extent. While the diffusion of political power in our democratic institutions may be far from ideal, it has still demonstrated the best history of doing so. So it would seem that while democratic forms of government are far from perfection in terms of their dispersion of political power and treatment of disadvantaged groups, they are the best solution presently. This stance is reinforced by what we know of the natural sciences.

For example, Einstein's theory of relativity established the theory of special relativity, which explains well the behavior of large scale events in the physical world. However, a separate theory of quantum mechanics has been developed to explain events on the micro- scale. Both theories attempt to explain the base phenomenon of interactions between matter and energy, but exist in separate realms due to the lack of a Unified Field Theory which would represent the perfection of the theory. The analogy holds for the imperfections of democracy, which despite its shortcomings is the best model in existence for efficiently organizing society.

Thus, it would appear that significant rational basis exists for a preference for

⁷⁵ Converse, *ibid.*

democracy over other forms of government. This is important because it lends validity to the disposition of the vast majority of political scientists who place faith in this particular method of government. It also provides a purposeful foundation for those seeking to implement the policy prescriptions derived from political analysis, since participation in political activity is one of the foundations of democratic forms of government.

However, the reader should not interpret the above to refer to an attempt to express an undue faith in the ultimate goals of democracy. Unfortunately, hierarchical power structures, as the preceding section asserts, are a ubiquitous presence in human organizations. Democracy, while a sincere effort to disperse power amongst the populous, will always and ultimately fail to do so. Power structures will remain in place, and subvert the prescribed authority of the vote through what are commonly issue-less political campaigns for political authorities whose issue stances and voting behavior are often the product of campaign contributions.

Political Science as core curriculum

University curriculum plays an important role in the process of socialization. Thus, it is of great importance that we decide the nature of a core curriculum, since this collection of ideas and information will determine the makeup of our society's highly educated members. What we choose to teach the whole of the student population determines much more than simply how broad of an education we as an education system provide. It dictates the extent to which tomorrow's professionals will understand the

world around them in general, and perhaps provides an opportunity for a positive implication of our new theory.

Dispositions towards western European traditions of political organization are “built into” American Government coursework, and serve to reinforce the elite domination of civil society posited by Gramsci, Scott and others.⁷⁶ In effect, focus upon the state’s contributions to civil society has resulted in the further entrenchment of the elites within the pyramidal power structures present in our society today.

Therefore, to eliminate this bias and facilitate a more comprehensive view of political events, actors and phenomenon, there exists a need to replace, augment or modify existing U.S. government introductory coursework with a political science course in the concepts of political power. Such coursework may then properly educate future contributing members of society upon the dynamics of political interactions including those which resulted in our current culture and mass-elite dichotomy. Thus students could extract more balanced understandings of political actions and events across diverse cultures with an education that focused upon political dynamics and not historical, culture specific institutions.

With this in mind, it is time we examine the role of political science in this light. Armed with a more translatable theory of political power (of which a concept of political power matrices would be only a small part), political scientists could submit to analysis a much broader range of social phenomenon and interpret that phenomenon within the same

⁷⁶ See Gramsci, A. *Prison Notebooks*; Scott, J. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*; Machaelvelli, N. *The Prince*; et. al.

theoretical framework. This results in a process of discovery which carries more intellectual weight due to the fact that its conclusions and findings hold true not only for one set of circumstances, but many.

Thus, the inclusion of these concepts into the mainstream core curriculum is logical due to their very broad applications. Their applicability to a broad range of politically-motivated scenarios would guarantee their value, while the perspective such theoretical tools impart upon history provide individuals with a less idealistic, ethnocentric views of events.

For example, much of the current coursework in American national government focuses upon the mechanical workings and hegemonic civil intrusions of our own federal government. Presumably, the purpose behind this exercise is to provide the student with a perspective upon our own political system. But of more intellectual value may be the ability to recognize common theoretical power structures within a myriad of political systems, including our own. This imparts upon the student a recognition of the machinations of a society and his or her place within the cogs. This aspect of alternative communication can serve to deconstruct and analyze the ruling ideologies of elites, presenting them in a manner that allows individuals receiving a university education to recognize more readily the elements of social control.

Until such coursework is introduced broadly, university core curriculum will fail to provide students with the tools needed to effectively critique societal problems and propose viable solutions which effectively build upon the lessons of the past.

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