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Administrative Science Quarterly
1–5
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DOI: 10.1177/00018392251315117
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Stewart R. Clegg. Frameworks of Power, Second Edition. Sage, 2023. 400 pp. $66, paper.

Stewart Clegg's *Frameworks of Power* is a seminal work that interrogates the concept of power in organizations with a degree of intellectual depth and skill that is, sadly, diminishing in our profession. The key strength of the original edition was the breadth of analytic lenses that Clegg brought to bear on the topic. Previous efforts to explicate power in organizations have largely failed because of a tendency to treat theory as a singular ideological commitment. Clegg takes a different approach. He mobilizes a range of prominent theorists—Machiavelli, Lukes, Weber, Durkheim, Giddens, Foucault, and many more—in a classic model of scholarship that seeks understanding and integration rather than mere prediction.

For this reason alone, I have always viewed *Frameworks* as the definitive work on institutional power in organizational theory. Yet, I always harbored a gnawing suspicion that something was missing in the first edition. In his early work on power, Clegg (1981: 545) observed that organizations are ''historically constituted entities.'' The notion that history, power, and organization are intimately connected has influenced much of my own view of organizations and institutions, and I have often wondered about the absence of history as a frame for power.

The new edition addresses this gap. It includes a new chapter titled ''A History of the Present,'' which analyzes two contemporary grand challenges—climate change and the Russia–Ukraine conflict—through a historical lens (although Clegg does not elevate history to a new frame of power). As I elaborate below, the addition of this single chapter opens the door to an entirely new conversation about the important but unexplored relationship among history, power, and organizing. Let me begin, however, with a brief overview of the original edition.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Frameworks describes three circuits of power: *episodic*, *dispositional*, and *facilitative*. Episodic power refers to the direct, observable exercise of power by individuals and groups to achieve specific outcomes. This is the most commonly understood manifestation of power in organizations. It is power in action, often producing conflict in decision making, as when a manager reprimands an employee for missing a deadline. Here power is overt, instrumental, and expressed in discrete events in which we can directly observe a causal connection between those who wield power and those who are subject to it. This is the version of power we typically see in our textbooks and our journals, in

which the focal questions are, who has the authority to exercise power and how can it be legitimately exercised?

Dispositional power, by contrast, is less visible because it is embedded in the norms and conventions of organizational conduct. Defined as power that arises from the systems, structures, and positions that create a predisposition for the exercise of power, dispositional power is embedded in an organization's rules, norms, and hierarchical structure. Dispositional power gives CEOs the authority to shape the strategy or culture of a corporation. Despite, or perhaps because of, its lack of visibility, dispositional power is more pervasive and more pernicious. The rules of power are cognitively legitimate, and because the rules are internalized as normal, they are difficult to change or oppose. More critically, we often cannot observe a direct causal relationship between those who have power and those who are subject to it. Here the focal question is, what expressions of power are predisposed by the structures, rules, and norms of an organization?

Facilitative power focuses on the processes that organize power in groups, organizations, and society. Facilitative power involves the resources and capacities that enable or constrain action, and is often embedded in the material and symbolic means available to actors, such as technology, infrastructure, or cultural practice. Facilitative power rests in taken-for-granted societal assumptions—i.e., race, class, gender—that make expressions of power in organizational decision making appear to be normal or natural. We see this form of power in the human resource algorithms that screen applicants based on assumptions of gender, race, or socioeconomic class. This systemic view of power seeks to understand the ways in which the invisible power of disposition is woven into everyday organizational routines, processes, and decision-making algorithms. Here the focal question is, how, when, and with what effect can power be exercised?

STRENGTHS

As noted, a clear strength of the book is its breadth of scholarship. Clegg masterfully integrates a long history of social theory into a clearly articulated theoretical narrative. He avoids the trivial essentialism common to most prevalent approaches to organizational power. He also avoids the negative attributions of power that tend to dominate most contemporary approaches to the topic. Instead, *Frameworks* presents power as a source of both domination and agency. This thoughtfully non-judgmental approach to power opens the door to more-idealized notions of power as a potential source of democratizing corporate governance or a source of re-enchanting the modern corporation.

Another strength of *Frameworks* is that it invites us to ask why, despite the importance of power in organizations, we see so little effort to theorize or study it in our scholarship. The book exposes the critical relationship between power and organizing. Contemporary organizations, particularly the modern corporation, exemplify power today in the same way that monarchies exemplified power in the feudal era and the Church exemplified power in medieval times in the West. But we see little discussion of power in our journals or our classrooms. The second edition introduces history into the nuanced relationship between power and organizations and provides a potential answer to the puzzle. When power becomes so deeply embedded in the constitution of

organizations that it is made to appear natural, we become blind to its presence. As Foucault (1988) and others have shown, this form of power becomes visible only when we observe it across space (i.e., in its varied expression across different cultures) or across time (its historical variance).

The novel contribution of the second edition of *Frameworks* is in how it draws our attention to history's role in masking power. Although Clegg does not explicitly claim this, the new chapter adds history as a fourth frame of power. Clegg describes the potency of a form of power that can shape the collective memory of a social group when this form is embedded in ideology. This is the power of dynastic institutions. Historical power is the type of power most commonly exercised by the nation state, but it is increasingly used by other social actors as a means of enhancing the effectiveness, status, and legitimacy of organizations.

Clegg illustrates the potency of historical power in his description of the irony of the Ukraine–Russia conflict. In the West, the war is framed as a struggle against imperialist nationalism. Ukraine, as an aspirational member of NATO, is framed as an agent of a new pan-national world order. However, as Clegg observes, Ukraine cannot successfully wage war without invoking the very same nationalist ideology that it purports to be fighting. The same is true of contemporary efforts to fight climate change through the use of market mechanisms such as sustainable consumption; environment, social, and governance (ESG) frameworks; or carbon pricing. An understanding of facilitative power encourages us to critically question the logic of examining the very institutions that created these problems as the only source of how to fix them. We should never underestimate the totalizing capacity of markets and corporations to reinforce their power as they create programs to solve problems that they created.

The capacity to use history and collective memory to conceal power, diffuse its causal source, and allow it to be expressed not in explosions of violence but, rather, in having it trickle out in micro-aggressions across generations creates the ultimate manifestation of power. Because it is exercised "gradually and out of sight" and is "dispersed across time and space," historical power cannot be wrested from its perpetrators because it is "not understood to be [power] at all" (Nixon, 2011: 2).

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

The above quote is adapted from Rob Nixon's definition of slow violence. I include a modified version of the quote because it captures my critique of the second edition of *Frameworks.* Yet, my critique is based not on the substantive argument but on what I see as missing. While the second edition has reinstated my faith in history as the key to understanding institutional power (as well as my confidence in Clegg as a true advocate for historical consciousness in organization studies), I would have liked to see some discussion of *violence*. Just as organizations and power are inseparable, so, too, are power and violence.

Different types of power become manifest in different forms of violence. This is the observation of Galtung (1969, 1990), who identified three categories of violence: *direct*, *structural*, and *cultural*. It is also the observation of Spivak (2023), who identified *epistemic* violence as distinct from direct violence. And

Zizek (2008) described *subjective*, *symbolic*, and *systemic* violence. Each of these types of violence clearly maps on to the three (or four) frames of power that Clegg offers. Each of them, in different ways, speaks to a larger category of institutional violence, which plagues us all.

The new focus on history in Clegg's second edition of *Frameworks* exposes the absence of both subjects in contemporary organization theory. I have always wondered why management scholars are much more comfortable talking about authority than power and are more prone to talk about time than history. One possible explanation is that we find comfort in authority and time because both fit into our assumptive identity as social scientists. We can base our theoretical arguments on hard anchors that can be directly observable. And they fit into the reductive assumptions of scientific reasoning in which time can be reduced to events and authority can be reduced to roles and rules.

Like Clegg's notion of episodic power, time is more amenable than history to direct observation, and authority is more amenable than power to direct observation. More critically, studies of power and history require a different type of sensitivity—a degree of critical awareness is needed to understand how to interpret power, and some sense of historical consciousness is needed to understand how to interpret history. Both of these skills seem to be lacking in contemporary organization studies. As a profession, we lack the impetus to look up levels of analysis for the constructs and answers we need in order to address the most pernicious problems facing organizations and society.

The new edition *of Frameworks* reminds us that our assumptive identity as scientists delimits our view of the empirical world. We may need to balance the reductive assumptions of a scientific identity with the more abductive assumptions offered by history and literature. The original edition of *Frameworks* emphasized the importance of looking up levels of analysis to broader structures and systems of power when we try to address pressing social issues, instead of looking down levels of analysis to individual or micro-level behaviors for answers. However, this new edition forces us to view the three types of power through the lens of history.

Clegg's power–history lens is useful in helping us to re-evaluate our current rush to embrace research with impact by reformulating our research agendas around grand challenges. Foremost, it encourages us to resist the immediate temporal assumptions of impactful research that devalues foundational research in favor of research whose impact can be felt tomorrow. *Frameworks* emphasizes the importance of historical research. But historical research is foundational. It rarely has impact that can be felt tomorrow.

One last, and very small, quibble with both editions. While the substantive content of *Framework*s holds up very well over the 35 years since the first edition's publication, the term "circuits" seemed dated in the original and is even more conspicuously so in the second. The term is used to describe the autocatalytic or regenerative nature of power. Like money, power grows in potency when it moves. It is notable that in the new chapter of the second edition, Clegg begins to lean on Baumann's (2013) notion of "liquid modernity" by using the word "fluidity" in place of circuitry. Fluidity is clearly the better term as it connotes an alchemical process that combines science with spirituality and magic, rather than relying exclusively on a scientific metaphor to explain power. Power has never been amenable to exclusively scientific analysis. I think this is Clegg's overarching point in both editions.

The distinction between circuitry and fluidity may seem trivial, but I think it illustrates the major contribution of adding history to a conversation about power. In his book *Mimesis*, the German philologist and literary critic Erich Auerbach (Auerbach and Said, 2013) observed that social reality as reflected in the literature of various historical eras represented the dominant social and intellectual conventions of the eras in which they were written. The term ''circuits'' reflects an era dominated by scientific rationality. The term ''fluidity'' does not. I'm not quite sure what dominant logic it represents, but I sense it better captures the zeitgeist of our current era, in which scientific debates are often confounded with conversations about conspiracies, social evaluations, and culture wars. Here—culture, social judgment, whispered narratives, and conspiracies—is where true power seems to lie in the twenty-first century.

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