Series editor's foreword

Bertrand Russell once argued that power is to social science what energy is to physics (Russell, 1938, p. 10). While power is one of the most important concepts in the social sciences, it is also one of the most complex and elusive to research.

Weber's analysis of power and authority (1947 and 1978) is one of the first social scientific discussions of power and it influenced the US power debates, which developed after the Second World War. In these debates Dahl's careful analysis stands out for its clarity in providing us with a conceptual vocabulary of power (Dahl, 1957 and 1968). This includes an agency-based, exercise and decision-making definition of power; conceptualised in terms of powerful actors (A) making subordinates (B) do something that they would not otherwise do. This exercise of power is distinct from resources (that may or may not be exercised) and it provides power-holders with power of specific scope. However, while providing a new set of conceptual tools to analyse about power relations, Dahl's work was subject to sustained critique from Bachrach and Baratz and others, who argued that power is also exercised through structural biases that are not necessarily reducible to overt decision-making (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962). Lukes followed this critique with his theorisation of the third dimension of power (Lukes, 1974), which concerns the mobilisation of belief and ideology to legitimise power relations of domination. The three-dimensional model was applied in a richly textured empirical study of Appalachian mining communities (Gaventa, 1982). Overall, as the three-dimensional power debates develop, the focus shifts from actions of the dominating actor A to the counter-intuitive and fascinating phenomenon that subordinate actors B often appear to actively acquiesce or participate in their own domination.

In a qualified critique of Lukes, Scott argued that appearances are often deceptive (Scott, 1990). The relationship between public and private discourse renders the working of three-dimensional power more complex

than any simplistic images of the oppressed willingly participating in their own domination, or internalising false consciousness. In turn, Scott's work has inspired an ongoing power literature on the complexities of resistance versus acquiescence.

In the 1980s, under the influence of the translation of Foucault's work (for instance, Foucault, 1979 and 1982), the Anglophone power debates shifted towards more epistemic and ontological analysis, which resonated with the shift of emphasis from the powerful to the conditions of the oppressed. This gave rise to fascinating work on the relation between power and discourse; power and truth; the way power influences the ontological formation of social subjects through discipline; and how new modes of governance have changed systemic power relations (including Clegg, 1989; Dean, 2010; Laclau, 2005; Flyvbjerg, 1998 and Hayward, 2000). However, in critique, many have argued that neo-Foucauldians tend to lose sight of the significance of individual agency (Lukes, 2005).

Bridging the intellectual divide between those following the Dahl–Lukes trajectory and the neo-Foucauldians, another important thread to the power debates comes from Giddens (1984) and Bourdieu's (1989) conceptualisations of structure as a verb. This way of thinking provides us with conceptual tools for making sense of how agents both structure and are structured by relations of power.

In international relations, the shift from agency toward systemic, epistemic and ontological perceptions of power took the form of a gradual move from realist focus on resources to a more idealist emphasis upon soft power (Nye, 1990 and 2011). Similarly, in rational choice theory, there emerged an emphasis upon the systemic situatedness of strategic choices.

In *Neoliberal power and public management reforms*, Peter Triantafillou bridges these contemporary theoretical trends in a highly sophisticated manner. This work documents the clash between classical traditions of understanding bureaucracy, as typified by Weber, and perspectives of governance deriving from neoliberal traditions that emphasise the construction of markets, performance indicators and the audit of bureaucratic structures. From these perspectives, systems are considered *sui generis*, yet they are thought to require the ideational control and managed structuration in order to become optimal. Of course, the concept of optimality is not simply an empirical fact but a normative judgement.

The effect of interrogating the social contexts and social ontology of agents has caused many theorists to re-evaluate the nature of power normatively, moving away from the automatic equation between power and domination to a perception of power as a condition of possibility for agency, thus freedom (Morris, 2002 and 2009). Thus, freedom and power move from being opposing categories to being mutually constitutive. Associated

with this normative re-evaluation, power theorists distinguish between power-to, power-with and power-over (Allen, 1998 and 1999; Pansardi, 2012). To begin with, power-over was considered a normative negative, suggesting oppression, while power-to and power-with were the positives. However, some theorists argue power-over can also have emancipatory, as well as the more obvious dominating, aspects (Haugaard, 2012). In *Neoliberal power and public management reforms*, Triantafyllou shows us how current attempts to manage the power structures of society are premised upon a neoliberal vision of freedom, which is paradoxically controlling of behaviour while seeking normative justification through the use of discourses that suggest individual emancipation.

Overall, the book series, *Social and Political Power*, seeks to build upon these rich traditions of power analysis, which currently make the study of social and political power one of the most vibrant fields in the social and political sciences. It also builds upon the success of the *Journal of Political Power*, which provides an important forum for article analysis, while this book series facilitates longer works on social and political power.

The book series is open to any of the multiplicity of traditions of power analysis, and it welcomes research that is theoretically oriented, as well as empirical research on power or practitioner oriented applications.

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