Chapter 1. A Pragmatics of Power

Rhetorical theory may benefit from a more sophisticated understanding of power
and the way in which it is mediated by communication. While theorists in sociology and
political science have offered numerous, albeit conflicting, schemas of power, these
concepts have not been applied comprehensively in rhetorical theory. What is lacking is
not the consideration of power, as it appears in rhetorical theory in many guises, but a
more precise differentiation of its levels and forms. For example, power may be analyzed
at the level of institutions as a distributive phenomenon, "power to," and at the level of
interaction as a relational phenomenon, "power over" (Wrong xxii, xiii). In his broad
review of the power literature, Dennis Wrong explains this distinction as follows:

> Power is both a generalized capacity to attain ends that is unequally
> distributed among the members of a society as a result of the structure of
> its major institutions ["power to"], on the one hand, and an asymmetrical
> social relation among persons manifested directly in social interaction or
> indirectly through anticipated reactions ["power over"], on the other.
> (xxii)

Different forms of power may be distinguished at both levels. For example, power may
take the form of coercion or manipulation at the interpersonal level; whereas at the
institutional level it may take the form of authority. A broad conceptual framework of
power derived from the work of social scientists contains great potential for rhetorical
analyses.

A rhetorical perspective has much to contribute to the broader understanding of
power as well. Although many researchers who conduct empirical studies of power, such

as political scientists, have devoted considerable effort toward developing an analytic

understanding of power, they have not approached its communicative aspects as

systematically. They have examined power from many perspectives, studying its forms,

bases, uses, amount, or scope, but have paid little attention to its means. Social theorists

who have developed more general theories of society direct extensive attention to

communication; however, they do not focus exclusively on the concept of power. For

example, Wrong criticizes Talcott Parsons, Anthony Giddens, and Michel Foucault for

their definitions of power: Parsons for constraining power to those forms that are

legitimate (247), Giddens for conflating power and social action in general (xx), and

Foucault for asserting a ubiquitous and all-encompassing view of power (xxii). In

contrast, Wrong defines power very narrowly as "the capacity of some persons to

produce intended and foreseen effects on others" (2). Wrong refers to Jürgen Habermas

as an example of a theorist holding such a view of power; however, like the other

theorists mentioned, Habermas does not restrict his focus to power but to social action in

general.

Habermas wishes to explain the achievement of intersubjective consensus through

rational argumentation; therefore, communication plays a central role in his theory. From

a rhetorical perspective, his approach is very illuminating, as he derives his concept of

communicative action from the structures of linguistic expressions. However, he limits

his consideration of communication to an ideal situation in which the only force brought

to bear is that of the better argument (*Reason* 25). He states,

> A communicatively achieved agreement has a rational basis; it cannot be
> imposed by either party, whether instrumentally through intervention in

the situation directly or strategically through influencing the decisions of opponents. Agreement can indeed be objectively obtained by force; but what comes to pass manifestly through outside influence or the use of violence cannot count subjectively as agreement. Agreement rests on common *convictions*. (*Reason* 287, emphasis in original)

This stipulation leaves his theory vulnerable to criticisms of its treatment of power. Critics have claimed that Habermas does not account for asymmetrical relations of power or for the struggle for resources (Roberts 61, 64). According to Peter Beilharz, Habermas would contend that his theory of undistorted communication is heuristic, providing an ideal that may facilitate processes of discernment and judgment (Roberts 61–62). But the exclusion of power weakens the descriptive value of his theory as well as its critical application. However, while Habermas does not focus on power, he does systematically discuss how action in general is mediated by communication. Thus he provides a conceptual framework broad enough to encompass a systematic treatment of power.

In the following sections, I begin by locating this dissertation within a larger research agenda, thereby providing the context for my analysis of the relationship between power, social structures, and communication. Next, I review Habermas' theory of communicative action, which forms a general framework for my analysis. Habermas relies on two fundamental oppositions in his discussion of action and society: communicative versus strategic action and lifeworld versus system. I structure my review accordingly. First, I summarize his concept of communicative action, which he derives from a consideration of the rationality of action. Second, I summarize his concepts of lifeworld and system, which he derives from a consideration of the rationalization of society.

Research Agenda

This dissertation represents the first two steps of a larger research agenda directed at explaining the relationship between higher-level social structures and communication in scientific organizations. Ideally, decisions in scientific organizations are made purely on the basis of science; in reality, these decisions are frequently subject to, and outweighed by, economic, political, or legal issues. Organizational communication reflects specific patterns imposed by social institutions, and it is those patterns that must be negotiated to communicate successfully. Thus the analysis of institutional context forms the core of my research agenda. Several assumptions underlie my approach to this problem: first, that the economic, political, and legal contexts of any problem play a role in defining and solving that problem; second, that economic, political, and legal constraints on organizational discourse derive from higher-level social structures; and, third, that these constraints can be examined from the perspective of power.

To reveal the implications of this approach, I am pursuing a five-part research agenda, the first two parts of which are undertaken in this dissertation. Because the power theorists have not reached a consensus on the forms or bases of power, my first step consists of an investigation of theories of power from sociology and political science. Based on this investigation, I am able to derive typologies of the forms of power and the bases of power. The second step involves the integration of the resulting typologies into Habermas' more general theory of communicative action. By expanding Habermas' theory in this way, I begin the process of understanding how communication mediates the exercise of power.

The remaining parts of my research agenda focus on integrating institutions and organizations into the framework suggested in this dissertation. Specifically, in the third step, I will integrate Niklas Luhmann's theory of function systems, which provides a more precise description of institutions than does Habermas' theory. The fourth step will involve the insertion of an organizational level between the interpersonal and institutional levels described here. This third level will enable me to elucidate the relationship between higher-level social structures and organizations using the theory of isomorphism, which maintains that organizations "mimic" institutional patterns (DiMaggio and Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited"). In the last step of my research, I will test the final integrated framework by conducting a meta-analysis of the literature on the *Challenger* incident.

In this dissertation, I focus on the first two parts of my research agenda in an attempt to answer the following questions: *How do speech acts mediate the exercise of power*? and *How does language encode structures of power*? My analysis consists of three main lines of inquiry: (1) an investigation of theories of power from sociology and political science, (2) a clarification of how Habermas conceptualizes power in his theory of communicative action, and (3) an explanation of how speech act theory bridges the gaps between the two. My approach to integrating the power literature and Habermas' theory of communicative action is one of conceptual clarification, or the identification, definition, and categorization of the elements of power, social structure, and communication at issue. Exploring the relationships between these concepts reveals the interfaces between them. By elaborating on the inner logic of each theory, I am able to identify inconsistencies as well as alternative interpretations and further potential

developments. By comparing and contrasting the theories, I am able to ascertain their

underlying assumptions as well as their similarities and dissimilarities.

The Theory of Communicative Action

In his comprehensive two-volume work *The Theory of Communicative Action*,

Habermas addresses the question of "whether, and if so how, capitalist modernization can

be conceived as a process of one-sided rationalization" (*Reason* 140). His main concern

is to refute the conclusion, reached by Max Weber, Georg Lukacs, Max Horkheimer,

Theodor Adorno, and many others, that the rationalization of society inevitably results in

the loss of cultural meaning and individual freedom. Instead, Habermas argues that the

process of rationalization has been incomplete: it has privileged the cognitive-

instrumental aspect of rationality at the expense of the moral-practical and aesthetic-

expressive aspects (*Reason* 221, 268). Habermas maintains that the rationalization of

society provides the potential for developing all aspects of rationality, supporting his

claim with a theory of modernity based on communication.

Habermas identifies two main problems with previous theories of modernity, both

of which his theory takes into account. First, previous theories fail to consider the

different aspects of rationality, focusing on the use of cognitive-instrumental rationality

for goal-directed action. In contrast, Habermas claims that rationality consists of three

aspects: (1) the cognitive-instrumental, characterized by an objectivating attitude of a

subject toward objects in the objective world; (2) the moral-practical, characterized by a

conformative attitude of a subject toward normative expectations in the social world; and

(3) the aesthetic-expressive, characterized by an expressive attitude of a subject toward him- or herself in the subjective world (*Reason* 49, 52). Second, previous theories of modernization also fail to distinguish between the lifeworld, or the background cultural knowledge within which individuals interact, and the autonomous, formally organized economic and political systems. Habermas finds this latter distinction critical, arguing that the social pathologies of modern life arise when autonomous systems of action encroach upon the communicatively structured lifeworld (*Reason* xlii; *Lifeworld* 330).

Correspondingly, he develops his theory of communicative action by way of three concepts (*Reason* xlii). First, he develops a concept of communicative rationality that cannot be reduced to an exclusively cognitive-instrumental perspective (*Reason* xlii). Second, he proposes a two-level concept of society that links lifeworld and system (*Reason* xlii; *Lifeworld* 305). Third, he advances a theory of modernity for explaining the social pathologies of modern society (*Reason* xlii).

The Rationality of Action

The first main concept that Habermas develops in his theory of communicative action is a concept of communicative rationality, which he articulates in his discussion of action. Habermas argues that the rationality of actions may be assessed on the basis of the relations actors assume with the world, rather than with respect to means, ends, and consequences (*Reason* 75). He explains how action is rational from the perspectives of four sociological concepts of action: teleological, normatively regulated, dramaturgical,

and communicative. Each of the first three concepts of action, he claims, privileges one relation between actor and world and constitutes a limit case of action.

Teleological Action

In the teleological model of action, which extends back to Aristotle, an actor selects means for achieving a desired end. Thus teleological action is also referred to as goal-directed action. The central concept of this model is that of a decision or choice between alternative courses of action (Habermas, *Reason* 85). One of the main weaknesses of the teleological model of action is that it only considers a solitary actor. When the actor has to take into account decisions on the part of at least one other goal-directed actor, the teleological model is expanded to a strategic model. The central concept for the strategic view of action is utility: means and ends are selected to maximize utility.

In the teleological model, the relation presupposed is that between an actor and a world of an existing state of affairs (Habermas, *Reason* 87). The actor forms beliefs, based on perceptions, about an existing state of affairs and intentions of bringing about a desired state of affairs. Through his or her beliefs and intentions, the actor can take up exactly two relations to the world that can be objectively assessed as rational or not. A relation may be assessed as rational based on whether the actor's perceptions and beliefs agree with an existing state of affairs in the world. In addition, a relation may be assessed as rational based on whether the actor succeeds in making a state of affairs in the world agree with his or her desires and intentions.

These assessments of rationality correspond to the direction of fit between expressions and the world referenced. The existing or desired states of affairs comprise the propositional contents of sentences expressing the actor's beliefs or intentions (Habermas, *Reason* 87). An actor may make assertions that are true or false; similarly, an actor may perform goal-directed interventions in the world that succeed or fail. Habermas summarizes, "These relations between actor and world allow then for expressions that can be judged according to criteria of *truth* and *efficacy*" (*Reason* 87, emphasis in original). Thus the concept of teleological action presupposes exactly one world—the objective world.

Habermas argues that the same presupposition holds for the model of strategic action (*Reason* 87). However, in the strategic model, there are at least two goal-directed actors who must both orient to and attempt to influence each other's decisions. In the case of strategic action, the success of an action depends on other actors, each of whom is oriented to his or her own success and cooperates only within the limits of his or her own utilitarian interests. Habermas maintains that while strategic actors must encompass the consideration of other decision-makers in their framework, they also presuppose only one objective world.

Normatively-Regulated Action

In the normatively-regulated model, an actor does or does not act in conformance with normative expectations. As opposed to the teleological model of action, this model considers members of a social group who orient their actions based on common values

(Habermas, *Reason* 85). The central concept for this model of action is that of

compliance (or noncompliance) with a norm.

This model of action, unlike the teleological model, presupposes two worlds—the

objective and the social. In addition to the objective world of existing states of affairs,

this model presupposes the social world to which actors belong. Habermas describes the

social world as consisting of "a normative context that lays down which interactions

belong to the totality of legitimate interpersonal relations" (*Reason* 88). All of those

actors who accept certain norms as valid belong to the same social world. While the

meaning of the objective world is explained in terms of existing states of affairs, the

meaning of the social world is explained in terms of recognized norms, or norms that are

accepted as valid by the addressed social group (Habermas, *Reason* 88).

Habermas distinguishes between ideally valid norms and de facto established

norms. An ideally valid norm is one that should be recognized by those affected because

it takes into account their common interests (Habermas, *Reason* 88). In contrast, a de

facto established norm is one that is recognized by those affected and thus grounded.

Norms are not necessarily cultural values, although values may be embodied in norms. If

cultural values become normatively binding, members of a social group can expect that

others will orient their actions to those normative prescriptions (Habermas, *Reason* 89).

In the case of normatively-regulated action, the actor's relations to the social

world also can be objectively assessed as rational or not (Habermas, *Reason* 89). First, a

relation may be assessed as rational based on whether the actor's motives and actions are

consistent with or deviate from existing norms. Second, a relation may be assessed as

rational based on whether the existing norms embody values that express the interests of

those affected and therefore deserve recognition. In the first case, actions are judged as

right or not with respect to a legitimate normative context; in the second, the norms

themselves are judged with respect to whether they can be justified (Habermas, *Reason*

89). As existing states of affairs are represented by true statements, recognized norms are

represented by ought-sentences or commands that are considered justified by the

addressed social group (Habermas, *Reason* 88). Although Habermas does not do so, these

assessments of rationality can also be related to the direction of fit between expressions

and the world referenced. An actor may make commands that are right or not with respect

to the normative context; similarly, an actor may make commands in which the

presupposed norms are either justified or not.

Thus the model of normatively-regulated action presupposes two worlds: an

objective world and a social world. In this model, actors can adopt both an objectivating

attitude toward an existing state of affairs as well as a conformative attitude toward a

norm (Habermas, *Reason* 90). Furthermore, the model presupposes that an actor is

capable of distinguishing between the factual (conditions and means) and the normative

(values) elements. Habermas concludes that in this model, action is represented as "a

relation to the social world to which the actor in his role as a norm-addressee belongs and

in which he can take up legitimately regulated interpersonal relations" (*Reason* 90).

Dramaturgical Action

In the dramaturgical model of action, the central character is neither the solitary

actor of teleological action nor the common social group of normatively-regulated action,

but a public. In other words, the participants in interaction constitute a public before

which each member presents him- or herself (Habermas, *Reason* 86). Habermas

summarizes this model of action as follows: "we understand social action as an encounter

in which participants form a visible public for each other and perform for one another"

(*Reason* 90). An actor expresses his or her subjectivity by purposefully presenting a

certain image. In this model, the central concept is the presentation of self; however, this

presentation is not spontaneous but stylized (Habermas, *Reason* 86).

In dramaturgical action, the relation presupposed is that between an actor and,

because he or she is presenting an image of his- or herself, the actor's own subjective

world. The subjective world consists of those subjective experiences to which an actor

has privileged access (Habermas, *Reason* 91). While the meaning of the objective world

is explained in terms of existing states of affairs and the meaning of the social world in

terms of recognized norms, the meaning of the subjective world is explained in terms of

interpreted needs (Habermas, *Reason* 92). In other words, addressees can interpret the

needs of the actor with reference to common cultural standards of value (Habermas,

Reason 92). The actor's relation to the subjective world can be objectively assessed as

rational or not in only one respect. A relation may be assessed as rational based on

whether the actor's subjective experience is truthful (Habermas, *Reason* 93). While

existing states of affairs are represented by true statements and valid norms by justified

ought-sentences, subjective experiences are represented by truthfully uttered experiential

sentences (Habermas, *Reason* 91).

Habermas claims that the model of dramaturgical action also presupposes two worlds: an objective world and a subjective world (*Reason* 93). He supports this claim by arguing that the actor views his or her interpersonal relations with the public as social facts. In other words, Habermas' assumption is that the actor is not concerned with conforming to norms but rather objectivates the relations he or she has with the public. Therefore, the actor assumes an objectivating attitude toward the objective world, which in this case contains social facts, and an expressive attitude toward the subjective world. One implication of this claim is that the actor may assume a strategic orientation in dramaturgical action similar to that assumed in teleological action. In this case, the actor treats the audience as opponents rather than as a public, cynically managing his or her presentation of self (Habermas, *Reason* 93). This type of impression management is not, however, identical to strategic action. Rather, the audience still understands the actor's action as a dramaturgical presentation of self rather than as a goal-directed intervention.

Communicative Action

The last general model of action, to which Habermas subscribes, is that of communicative action. In the model of communicative action, two or more actors establish interpersonal relations by which they coordinate their actions. The main mechanism by which they establish those relations is through reaching understanding and thereby coming to an agreement. Therefore, the central concept for this model is interpretation, which, according to Habermas, consists of "negotiating definitions of the situation which admit of consensus" (*Reason* 86).

This model is unique in that in addition to actor-world relations, a linguistic medium that reflects those relations is presupposed (Habermas, *Reason* 94). Habermas argues that although in each of the previous models participants' actions are mediated through speech acts, language is conceived one-sidedly (*Reason* 94). The teleological model views language as one of several media by which actors can influence each other; the normative model views language as a medium that transmits cultural values; the dramaturgical model views language as a medium of self-presentation. In contrast, Habermas states,

> Only the communicative model of action presupposes language as a medium of uncurtailed communication whereby speakers and hearers, out of the context of their preinterpreted lifeworld, refer simultaneously to things in the objective, social, and subjective worlds in order to negotiate common definitions of the situation. (*Reason* 95)

According to Habermas, the one-sidedness of the first three models is apparent in that the type of communication associated with each is a limit case (*Reason* 95). In the teleological model, the type of communication is the indirect communication of actors who are concerned only with realizing their own ends. In the normative model, the type of communication is the consensual action of those who actualize a pre-existing normative agreement. In the dramaturgical model, the type of communication is the presentation of self for a public. Thus each model thematizes one function of language: the intervention in a state of affairs, the establishment of an interpersonal relationship, or the expression of a subjective experience (Habermas, *Reason* 95). In contrast, the communicative model of action encompasses all three functions of language.

Based on his analysis, Habermas proposes three formal world-concepts that

correspond to the three worlds with which actors may assume relations. He derives these

world-concepts from Karl Popper's three worlds of physical objects and events; mental

states and episodes (subjective mind); and "semantic contents of symbolic formations"

(objective mind) (*Reason* 77). While the relations between entities in the physical world

can be described in terms of causality, the relations between entities in the symbolic

world are described in terms of internal connections of meaning. Subjects interact with

both the first and third worlds; however, the first and third worlds do not interact directly.

Subjects engage in cognitive-instrumental relations, such as representations and actions,

with things and events in the physical world. In addition, subjects engage in objectivating

relations with the semantic contents of the symbolic world. Thus subjects mediate the

first and third worlds by using objective knowledge to describe and explain events and

persons. Habermas defines the three worlds as follows:

> It is the actors themselves [rather than observers] who seek consensus and
> measure it against truth, rightness, and sincerity, that is, against the "fit" or
> "misfit" between the speech act, on the one hand, and the three worlds to
> which the actor takes up relations with his utterance, on the other. Such
> relations hold between an utterance and
>
> 1. The objective world (as the totality of all entities about which true statements
>   are possible);
>
> 2. The social world (as the totality of all legitimately regulated interpersonal
>   relations);
>
> 3. The subjective world (as the totality of the experiences to which the speaker
>   has privileged access). (*Reason* 100)

Participants presuppose the integrated system of worlds as an interpretive framework for

reaching understanding (Habermas, *Reason* 98). In their utterances, they raise claims to

validity with respect to the three worlds, each of which may be accepted or contested.

Habermas summarizes,

> …an actor who is oriented to understanding … must raise at least three
> validity claims with his utterance, namely:
>
> 1. That the statement made is true (or that the existential presuppositions of the propositional content mentioned are in fact satisfied);
>
> 2. That the speech act is right with respect to the existing normative context (or that the normative context that it is supposed to satisfy is itself legitimate); and
>
> 3. That the manifest intention of the speaker is meant as it is expressed. (*Reason* 99)

Participants in communication can describe states of affairs, establish interpersonal

relations, and express subjective experiences. With their utterances, they claim truth for

statements and existential presuppositions, rightness for legitimately regulated actions

and the normative context, and truthfulness for the expression of subjective experiences

(Habermas, *Reason* 99). Correspondingly, these claims are assessed as rational or not

with respect to the direction of fit between the speech act and the three worlds with which

the actor takes up relations (Habermas, *Reason* 100). If participants' perceptions of a

situation diverge, they must integrate the alternate definitions through a process of

interpretation.

Habermas correspondingly defines communicative competence as the ability of a

speaker to issue an utterance such that its propositional content fulfills truth conditions,

its performance conforms to a normative context, and its expression represents what is

intended (*Communication* 29). By issuing the speech act, the speaker assumes obligations

to provide grounds for a truth claim, to provide justification for a rightness claim, or to

prove trustworthy for a truthfulness claim (Habermas, *Communication* 63–65). To reach

a communicatively achieved agreement, the speaker and hearer must agree on three

levels: shared propositional knowledge, normative accord, and mutual trust (Habermas,

Reason 308). If a speaker is grammatically and communicatively competent then the

hearer will comprehend the speech act and share the speaker's knowledge, interact with

the speaker, and trust the speaker (Habermas, *Communication* 29).

The concepts of social action described differ according to how they specify the

coordination among different actors (Habermas, *Reason* 101). Coordination consists of

either interlacing egocentric calculations of utility (teleological model), socially

integrating agreement about values and norms (normatively regulated model), consensual

relations between actors and publics (dramaturgical model), or cooperative processes of

reaching understanding (communicative model) (Habermas, *Reason* 101). Furthermore,

the various models of social action differ according to the conditions under which an

actor pursues a goal: success, legitimacy, self-presentation, or agreement (Habermas,

Reason 101). In the rest of his discussion, Habermas contrasts communicative with

strategic action, which represent the two extremes of social action in general.

A Typology of Action

Based on his analysis of the different models, Habermas proposes a typology of

social action that categorizes action along two dimensions: action orientation and action

situation (*Reason* 285). Actors may be oriented either to success (interest positions) or to

understanding (normative agreement) (Habermas, *Reason* 285). An actor oriented to

achieving success wishes to attain an end, selects appropriate means for the situation, and

calculates foreseeable consequences (Habermas, *Reason* 285). In contrast, actors oriented

to reaching understanding negotiate a common definition of a situation so as to

coordinate their actions (Habermas, *Reason* 286). An action situation may be either

nonsocial or social. Accordingly, Habermas identifies two types of action oriented to

success: instrumental action, which is nonsocial, and strategic action, which is social. In

instrumental action, an actor follows technical rules of action and the rationality of his or

her action is assessed in terms of the efficiency of intervention (Habermas, *Reason* 285).

In strategic action, an actor follows rules of rational choice and the rationality of his or

her action is assessed in terms of the efficacy of influencing the decisions of a rational

opponent (Habermas, *Reason* 285). Habermas contrasts these two types of action with

communicative action, in which actors are oriented to reaching understanding.[1]

In his explanation of universal pragmatics, Habermas provides a more detailed

typology of action. Again, he distinguishes between communicative and strategic action,

maintaining that communication participants presuppose a basis of mutually recognized

validity claims in communicative action but not in strategic action (*Communication* 209).

However, he further breaks down both categories into subordinate types of action. The

two types of communicative action are action oriented to reaching understanding and

consensual action. In consensual action a common definition of the situation can be

presupposed; in action oriented to reaching understanding, the definition must be

negotiated (Habermas, *Communication* 209). The two types of strategic action are openly

and latently strategic action. Latently strategic action, in turn, is comprised of

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[1] Obviously, there is no nonsocial form of action that corresponds to communicative action, as by definition communication refers to at least two individuals.

manipulation and systematically distorted communication. In manipulation, a participant

deceives another participant about the basis of consensual action; in systematically

distorted communication, a participant deceives him- or herself (Habermas,

Communication 210). Habermas' complete typology is shown in Figure 1.
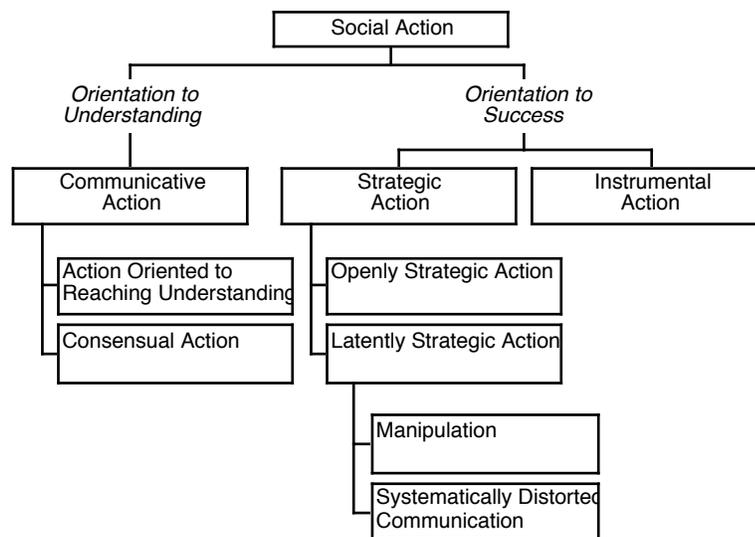
Figure 1. Complete Typology of Action

Exercises of power are types of action that are performed with the intentions of

producing effects. As Wrong has maintained, power may be distinguished from action

based on the consideration of effects rather than choice (xxi). While social control in

general refers to the mutual influence, which may be either intended or unintended, that

individuals exercise in social interaction, power in particular corresponds to intended

influence (Wrong 4). Wrong's category of intended influence can be further

differentiated with respect to whether influence is achieved via communicative action or

strategic action. Power corresponds to the second of these, strategic action, in which an

actor intends to intervene in or influence a state of affairs. Thus the consideration of

"power over," defined as asymmetrical social relations, may be integrated into Habermas' theory of communicative action at the level of action.

Two-Level Concept of Society

The second main concept that Habermas develops in his theory of communicative action is a two-level concept of society that links lifeworld and system, which he derives by considering the rationalization of Western society. Habermas maintains that the differentiation of society is characterized by an increase in lifeworld rationality, an increase of system complexity, and the differentiation of lifeworld and system from one another (*Lifeworld* 153). According to him, Western rationalization has occurred at three levels: culture, society, and personality. At the level of culture, cognitive, evaluative, and expressive elements have been differentiated into separate spheres of value, which correspond to cultural systems of action (Habermas, *Reason* 165, 234). At the level of society, the capitalist economy and the modern state have been differentiated out and constitute the social systems of action (Habermas, *Reason* 158, 163, 166). Finally, at the level of personality, a methodical conduct of life has developed (Habermas, *Reason* 166). From the perspective of Habermas' dual concept of society, the lifeworld refers to the cultural spheres of value and the associated cultural systems of action. In contrast, system refers to the social systems of action represented by the capitalist economy and the modern state. From the perspective of action, actors interact within the lifeworld. Habermas' concept of the lifeworld is complex; therefore, I begin by summarizing his formulation of two concepts of the lifeworld.

Cultural Concept of Lifeworld

Habermas first introduces the lifeworld as a correlate to the processes of reaching understanding (*Reason* 70). From the perspective of participants in communicative action, the lifeworld is the "horizon-forming context of an action situation" (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 137; *Reason* 70, 335). In communicative action, actors attempt to reach an agreement on their interpretation of a situation. The situation forms the immediate context of their interpretive efforts, representing a segment of the lifeworld that is relevant to the theme at hand (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 122, 127). The lifeworld forms the indirect context for the situation, serving as a source of situation definitions that are presupposed to be unproblematic and from which actors can draw in processes of reaching understanding (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 131; *Reason* 70). In cases of disagreement, actors attempt to correlate their interpretations by demarcating the three worlds with respect to the situation (Habermas, *Reason* 70). Thus the structure of an action situation consists of the interconnections of meaning between a communicative utterance, the immediate context or situation, and the horizon of meaning provided by the lifeworld (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 124).

The lifeworld stores the background convictions of actors as well as what Habermas calls "the interpretive work of preceding generations," or the cultural stock of knowledge (*Reason* 70). The concept of communicative action throws this background of implicit knowledge into relief (Habermas, *Reason* 335, 337). As Habermas states,

> Communicative action takes place within a lifeworld that remains at the backs of participants in communication. It is present to them only in the prereflective form of taken-for-granted background assumptions and naively mastered skills. (*Reason* 335)

The collective background knowledge and context provided by the lifeworld determines actors' interpretations of communication to a high degree. As shown by John Searle, the meaning of an utterance depends on a background of shared knowledge (Habermas, *Reason* 335–36). This background knowledge has three features: it is implicit; it is holistically structured; it is beyond our disposition (Habermas, *Reason* 336). As long as the background knowledge is unproblematic, it remains unconscious. It becomes visible when actors engage in the process of reaching understanding with one another.

Habermas argues that the rationalization of the lifeworld concurrent with the modernization of society has shifted emphasis from traditional interpretations to the process of reaching understanding (*Reason* 340). In other words, the traditional interpretations of the lifeworld, or the pre-interpreted stock of cultural knowledge, serve less to meet the needs of participants in interaction. Instead, participants must increasingly rely on a process of rationally motivated agreement. This process of reaching agreement may be achieved through interpretations reached by the participants themselves or through a professionalized knowledge provided by experts. By shifting emphasis from pre-interpreted knowledge to a process of interpretative interaction, the rationalization of the lifeworld burdens communicative action with both expectations and risks (Habermas, *Reason* 340–41). Communicative action must provide the mechanism by which consensus can be reached; however, there is always the risk of disagreement.

With his description of the lifeworld from the performative perspective of participants in communicative action, Habermas articulates how the lifeworld provides cultural resources to actors attempting to reach understanding. Specifically, the lifeworld

consists of a "culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretive patterns" (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 124). However, Habermas maintains that the lifeworld is not only a cultural concept, but also a sociocultural one (*Lifeworld* 134, 136).

Sociocultural Concept of Lifeworld

Habermas also describes the lifeworld from the objectivating perspective of narrators. From this perspective, the lifeworld background consists of individual skills and socially customary practices as well as cultural knowledge, providing individual and social as well as cultural resources (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 135). Thus Habermas suggests an everyday or sociocultural concept of the lifeworld, within which actors locate their communication in social space and historical time as well as a certain cultural tradition (*Lifeworld* 136). Such an external perspective on the lifeworld enables theoretical descriptions of how communicatively structured lifeworlds are reproduced as a whole (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 137).

Habermas argues that the process of rationalization differentiates the structural components of the lifeworld into the three levels of culture, society, and personality (*Lifeworld* 107). He defines culture as the stock of knowledge from which participants in interaction draw, society as the legitimate orders through which participants regulate their social memberships and secure solidarity, and personality as the competences that enable a subject to speak and act (*Lifeworld* 138). Correspondingly, the reproduction of the lifeworld integrates new situations into the existing stock of knowledge in several dimensions: the semantic dimension of meanings of the cultural tradition, the socio-spatial dimension of socially integrated groups, and the historical dimension of

successive generations (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 137–38). Furthermore, the reproduction of

the three levels of the lifeworld is achieved via communicative actions:

> In coming to an understanding with one another about their situation,
> participants in interaction stand in a cultural tradition that they at once use
> and renew; in coordinating their actions by way of intersubjectively
> recognizing criticizable validity claims, they are at once relying on
> membership in social groups and strengthening the integration of those
> same groups; through participating in interactions with competently acting
> reference persons, the growing child internalizes the value orientations of
> his social group and acquires generalized capacities for action. (Habermas,
> *Lifeworld* 137)

Therefore, the processes of cultural reproduction, or the transmission of cultural

traditions; of social integration, or the stabilization of solidarity; and of socialization, or

the continuity of life histories, become more dependent on criticizable validity claims

(Habermas, *Lifeworld* 140–41, 107). These three processes of reproduction correspond to

the three functions performed by language. As a medium for reaching mutual

understanding, communicative action transmits and renews cultural knowledge; as a

medium for coordinating action, it integrates society and establishes solidarity; and as a

medium for socializing, it forms personal identities (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 63, 137). Thus

it is through communicative actions that processes of cultural reproduction, social

integration, and individual socialization occur.

The cultural reproduction of the lifeworld secures the continuity of tradition and

the coherence of knowledge, both of which are measured by the rationality of the

knowledge accepted as valid (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 140). Disturbances of cultural

reproduction occur when the cultural stock of knowledge cannot cover new situations.

These disturbances are reflected in a loss of meaning and lead to legitimation crises at the

level of society and orientation crises at the level of personality. According to Habermas, "The interpretive schemes accepted as valid fail, and the resource 'meaning' becomes scarce" (*Lifeworld* 140).

The social integration of the lifeworld coordinates actions through legitimately regulated interpersonal relations and stabilizes group identities, both of which are measured by the solidarity of group members (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 140). Disturbances of social integration occur when actors cannot coordinate actions in new situations based on existing legitimate orders. These disturbances are reflected in anomie. In this case, "Legitimately regulated social memberships are no longer sufficient, and the resource 'social solidarity' becomes scarce" (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 141).

The socialization of lifeworld members secures the acquisition of generalized competences for action and the harmonization of individual life histories with collective forms of life, both of which are measured by the responsibility of persons (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 141). Disturbances of socialization occur when the competences of actors cannot maintain the intersubjectivity of action situations and are reflected in psychopathologies and alienation. Habermas summarizes, "The personality system can preserve its identity only by means of defensive strategies that are detrimental to participating in social interaction on a realistic basis, so that the resource 'ego strength' becomes scarce" (*Lifeworld* 141).

Each reproduction process also maintains the other structures of the lifeworld (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 141–42). Cultural reproduction helps maintain institutions by providing legitimations and personalities by providing socialization patterns. Social

integration helps maintain personalities by providing legitimately regulated social

memberships and culture by providing duties and obligations. Finally, socialization helps

maintain culture by providing interpretive accomplishments and society by providing

motivations for norm-conforming actions.

Given these definitions of the lifeworld, it is now possible to define the systems of

action. Habermas correlates the systems of action with the two levels of society. At the

level of lifeworld, the cultural spheres of value are institutionalized in cultural systems of

action. At the level of system, social systems of action are differentiated out of the

lifeworld by means of institutionalized steering media. In the following sections, I discuss

the rationalization of culture with respect to the cultural spheres of value and associated

systems of action. Then I discuss the modernization of society with respect to the social

systems of action and their associated steering media.

Cultural Systems of Action

Habermas describes cultural rationalization in terms of the rationalization of

worldviews. Worldviews are the cultural interpretive systems that unify societies. They

provide systems of symbols through which members of a society interpret their world and

coordinate their actions. By conferring meaning on themes such as birth and death,

worldviews structure forms of life (Habermas, *Reason* 59). Thus the rationality of a

worldview is measured in terms of the formal-pragmatic concepts, or interpretive tools,

that it provides to a society's members rather than in terms of the cognitive development

of those members (Habermas, *Reason* 44–45). Habermas compares the mythical and the

modern worldviews in this connection. As described by Lévi-Strauss, the "savage mind"

totalizes the perceptual world, merging natural and social information into a mythical worldview (Habermas, *Reason* 45–46). In contrast, the modern worldview distinguishes between external nature and culture, language and culture, and culture and internal nature.

The rationalization of worldviews is a process by which mythical powers are transformed into ideas and concepts (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 83). This rationalization occurs through the formal restructuring of worldviews and the differentiation of world-concepts. By formal restructuring, Habermas refers to the application of formal operations of thought to beliefs, to the process of making meanings more precise and concepts more clear (*Reason* 175–76). By differentiation of world-concepts, Habermas refers to the separation of cognitive, evaluative, and expressive elements of culture into separate spheres of value (*Reason* 176, 235). The resulting cultural spheres of value have their own internal, autonomous logics (Habermas, *Reason* 176). Thus cultural advances such as improvements in technique or enhancements of values may occur in each sphere according to its internal logic. These cultural advances are measured against particular universal validity claims.

For example, in the scientific sphere of value, cultural advances are assessed with respect to the validity claim of truth (Habermas, *Reason* 177). In this domain, value enhancement entails progress in the empirical-theoretical knowledge of external nature. In the aesthetic sphere of value, advances are assessed with respect to the validity claim of authenticity (Habermas, *Reason* 177). Here value enhancement entails the improvement of individuals' aesthetic-expressive knowledge of their own inner natures.

Finally, in the legal-moral sphere of value, advances are assessed with respect to the

validity claim of normative rightness (Habermas, *Reason* 177). Thus value enhancement

entails the improvement of the moral-practical knowledge, or moral and legal theory, of a

society by its members. These cultural spheres of value, each of which is defined by an

inner logic of ideas, comprise the level of cultural tradition (Habermas, *Reason* 234).

Habermas contrasts the level of cultural tradition with that of institutionalized

action systems (*Reason* 234). The level of institutionalized action systems consists of the

cultural systems of action (Habermas, *Reason* 165, 234). While the cultural spheres of

value are comprised by ideas alone, it is ideas in conjunction with interests that comprise

the cultural systems of action (Habermas, *Reason* 234). Habermas identifies three cultural

systems of action, which correspond to the three cultural spheres of value respectively:

the scientific enterprise, the artistic enterprise, and the religious community (*Reason* 165–

66, 234). Furthermore, certain complexes of rationality, or modern structures of

consciousness, correspond to each system of action (Habermas, *Reason* 239). In

particular, cognitive-instrumental rationality is institutionalized in the scientific enterprise

and aesthetic-practical rationality in the artistic enterprise (Habermas, *Reason* 240).

However, Habermas argues that moral-practical rationality is not institutionalized but

rather subordinated by the other two systems, with which it is incompatible (*Reason* 240–

41). He explains this exception by describing the different paths followed by morality and

legality in the process of rationalization.

In conjunction with the rationalization of society, moral and legal norms are

generalized. As general principles, they must be applied reflectively; thus the

universalization of morality and legality increases the need for justification as well as the scope of interpretation (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 84, 107). Habermas argues that the growing autonomy of morality and legality leads in two different directions: toward ethics of conviction and responsibility and toward formal law (*Reason* 162; *Lifeworld* 107). The assessments of rationality diverge as well. While the ethics are rational in that they are based on universal principles, legal norms are devalued to conventions that must be justified and enacted by law (Habermas, *Reason* 162–63). Thus legal norms are institutionalized at the level of society; whereas universalized morality, manifested in the religious community, permeates all three levels of the lifeworld (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 92).

In short, the scientific enterprise, the religious community, and the artistic enterprise comprise the cultural systems of action. While the cognitive and aesthetic cultural spheres of value are institutionalized in the scientific and artistic enterprises, the normative cultural sphere of value permeates all levels of the lifeworld in the form of the religious community.

Social Systems of Action

Habermas contrasts the rationalization of culture with the modernization of society, comparing the cultural systems of action with the social systems of action. He follows Karl Marx and Weber in viewing the modernization of society as the differentiation of the capitalist economy and the modern state (*Reason* 158). Habermas views the modern state and the capitalist economy, along with the nuclear family, as the social systems of action that delineate the structure of society (*Reason* 166). The two

systems of economy and state complement and stabilize each other, while formal law

organizes them: "Formal law, based on the principle of enactment, serves as a means for

organizing the capitalist economy and the modern state as well as the interaction between

them" (Habermas, *Reason* 158; *Lifeworld* 365).

According to Habermas, the rationalization of the lifeworld uncouples lifeworld

and system (*Lifeworld* 318). This uncoupling occurs as a result of the institutionalization

of steering media (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 154). Steering media such as money and power

serve as substitutes for communicative actions, thereby uncoupling their associated social

systems from the lifeworld. As Habermas explains,

> Via the media of money and power, the subsystems of the economy and
> the state are differentiated out of an institutional complex set within the
> horizon of the lifeworld; *formally organized domains of action* emerge
> that—in the final analysis—are no longer integrated through the
> mechanism of mutual understanding, that sheer off from lifeworld
> contexts and congeal into a kind of norm-free sociality. (Habermas,
> *Lifeworld* 307)

Thus the capitalist economy and the modern state are autonomous systems that are

differentiated out from, as well as anchored in, the lifeworld by the steering media of

money and power respectively. Furthermore, formal law mediates the two social systems

by organizing them (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 365). From the perspective of the dual concept

of society, the capitalist economy and the modern state constitute the system part of

society, interfacing with the lifeworld through institutionalized steering media.

Habermas characterizes the social systems of action in terms of the organizational

nucleus associated with each. According to him, the organizational nucleus of the

capitalist economy is the capitalist enterprise. The capitalist enterprise is separated from

the household, orienting investment decisions to market opportunities and setting in

action free labor power (Habermas, *Reason* 158). In addition, the capitalist enterprise

relies on rational bookkeeping and the technical use of scientific knowledge. These

characteristics reflect a Marxist emphasis on the objectivation of labor and a Weberian

emphasis on the rationalization of technique. Thus the capitalist enterprise is tailored to

rational economic action, comprising one manifestation of the institutionalization of

purposive-rational or goal-directed action (Habermas, *Reason* 166).

According to Habermas, the rational public institution comprises the nucleus of

the modern state. The rational public institution commands a standing military force and

has a monopoly on setting laws and legitimately using force (Habermas, *Reason* 158). In

addition, it operates on the basis of a centralized, permanent tax system and organizes

administration bureaucratically through the rule of specialized officials (Habermas,

Reason 158). In its emphasis on taxation and the bureaucratization of the state, this

description also reflects Marxist and Weberian views respectively. Thus the rational

public institution is tailored to rational administration, comprising a second manifestation

of the institutionalization of purposive-rational action (Habermas, *Reason* 166).

Finally, Habermas contrasts formal law, or the legal system, with the legal

institution (*Lifeworld* 365). In the dual structure of society, the principle of justification is

attributed to the legal institution, while the principle of enactment is attributed to the legal

system (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 365). Habermas also lists several characteristics of legal

domination, presumably the organizational nucleus of the legal system. Any norm may be

enacted by law, which constitutes a system of abstract rules (Habermas, *Reason* 163).

This system of abstract rules is applied to particular cases by officials who temporarily

hold office and thus possess limited authority (Habermas, *Reason* 163). Those individuals

who are subject to the authority of the political community are expected to comply with

laws. Furthermore, they comply as citizens who are obeying the laws not the officials

(Habermas, *Reason* 163). Habermas concludes, "Modern legal representations, which

were systematized in the form of rational natural law, entered into the judicial system and

the juridical organization of economic commerce and government administration through

legal training, professionally inspired public justice, and so on" (*Reason* 166).

While the cultural systems of action are mediated by communicative action, the

social systems of action are mediated by steering mechanisms such as money and power

(Habermas, *Lifeworld* 318). In Habermas' formulation of society, institutions, or the

societal components of the lifeworld, are distinct from the subsystems of society, or the

capitalist economy and the modern state (*Lifeworld* 318). From a system perspective,

society is split into spheres of action associated with the lifeworld and spheres of action

"neutralized" against the lifeworld (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 309). Lifeworld spheres are

organized by communicative action, while system spheres are organized formally by

steering media. The resulting socially integrated lifeworld and systemically integrated

system oppose one another (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 309, 318–19).

Lifeworld as Interface

In essence, the lifeworld interfaces with both the worldviews of a society's

members and the social systems of action (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 126–27, 318–20). While

worldviews provide members of a society with formal-pragmatic concepts through which

they interpret their world, systems are autonomous sets of elements organized around

functional imperatives (Habermas, *Reason* 44–45, *Lifeworld* 151). Habermas

correspondingly describes the lifeworld from two perspectives: the perspective of

participants in communicative action and the perspective of narrators (*Lifeworld* 137).

From the perspective of participants, the lifeworld provides the context in which they

assume relations with the three worlds. From the perspective of narrators, the lifeworld

interfaces with the social systems of action by means of institutionalized roles.
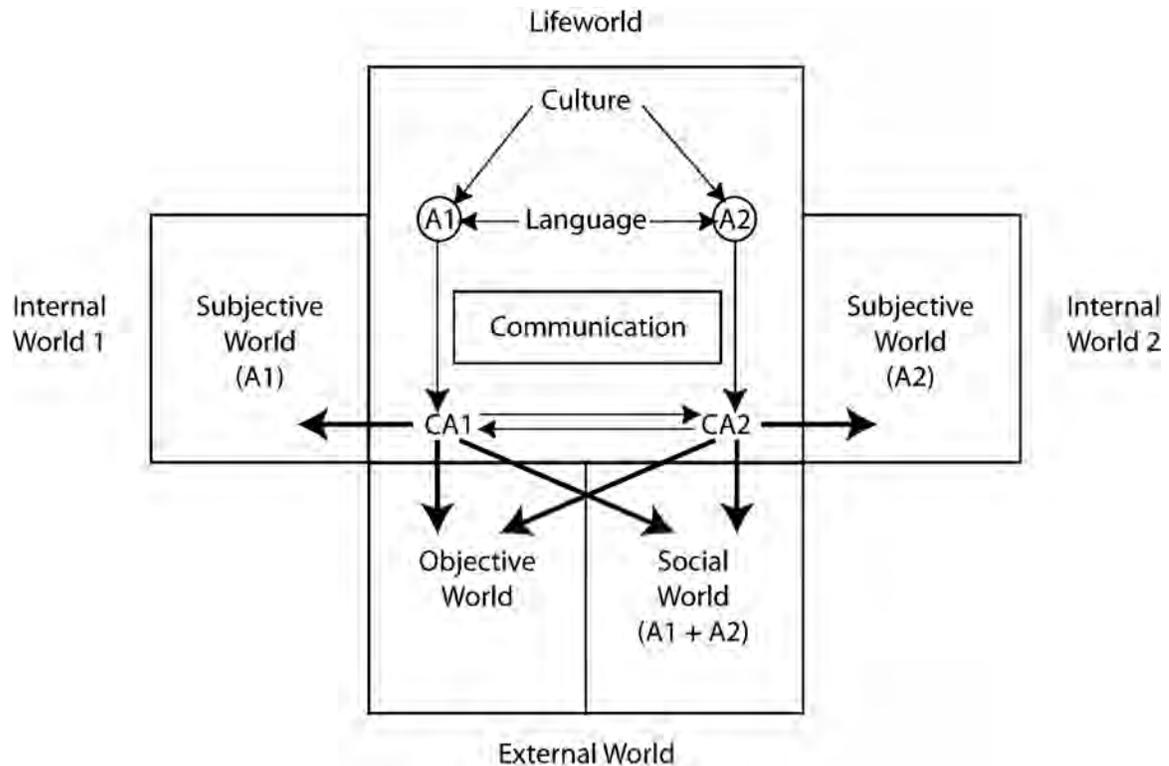
As referred to above, Habermas states that the rationality of an action can be

assessed in terms of the relations presupposed between actor and world (*Reason* 75).

Correspondingly, he proposes a reference system consisting of three worlds: the

objective, the subjective, and the social. These worlds form a system of coordinates in

which actors may agree on what may be treated as a fact, a valid norm, or a subjective

experience. Habermas distinguishes the lifeworld from these three worlds. According to

him, the lifeworld is constituted by language and culture, forming the context of

interaction (*Lifeworld* 125). In other words, participants in interaction refer to something

in the objective, social, or subjective worlds by means of communicative acts performed

within the horizon of the lifeworld (see Figure 2). Habermas explains,

> The lifeworld is, so to speak, the transcendental site where speaker and
> hearer meet, where they can reciprocally raise claims that their utterances
> fit the world (objective, social, or subjective), and where they can criticize
> and confirm those validity claims, settle their disagreements, and arrive at
> agreements. (*Lifeworld* 126)

> However, the concept of the lifeworld also complements the concept of system:

> In bourgeois society, over against those areas of action that are
> systematically integrated in the economy and the state, socially integrated

areas of action take the shape of private and public spheres, which stand in
a complementary relation to one another. (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 318–19)

Lifeworld

Culture

Language

Communication

Internal
World 1

Subjective
World
(A1)

Subjective
World
(A2)

Internal
World 2

Objective
World

Social
World
(A1 + A2)

External World

Heavy arrows indicate world-relations that actors (A) establish with their utterances (CA).
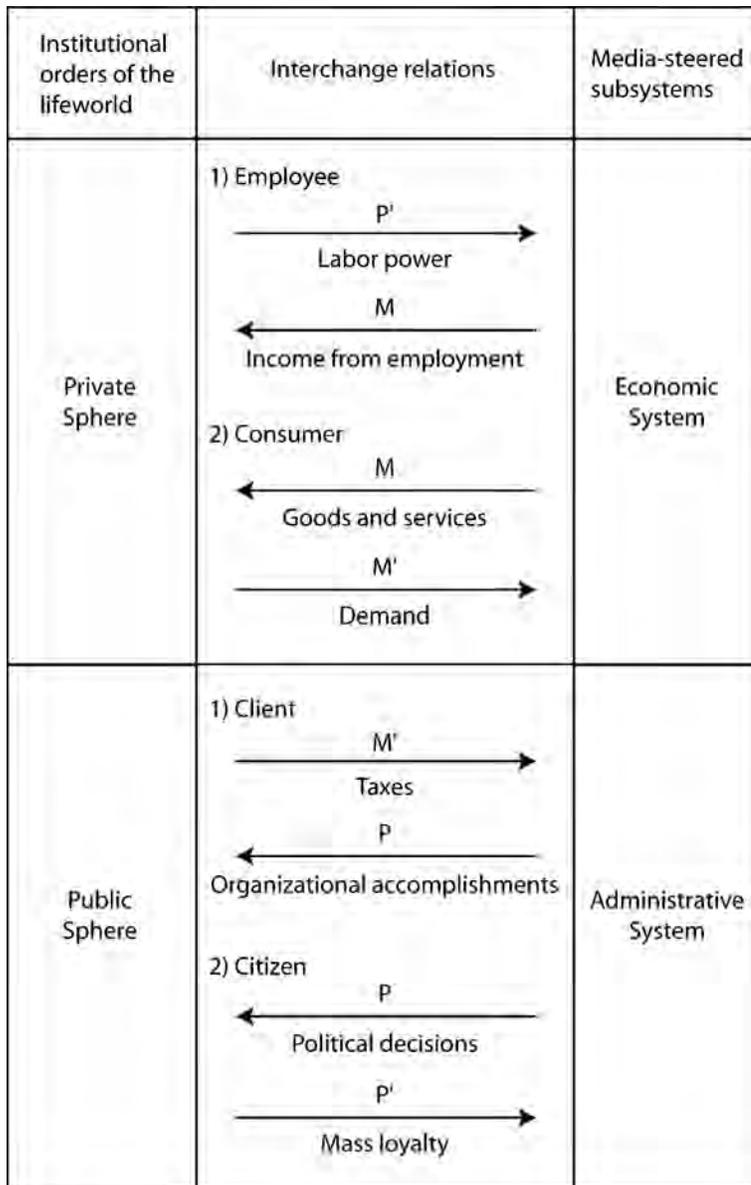
Source: Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume Two: Lifeworld and System: A
Critique of Functionalist Reason*. Trans. Thomas McCarthy. Boston, MA: Beacon, 1987. 127.

Figure 2. World-Relations of Communicative Acts

From the perspective of system, the lifeworld is comprised of the public and private

spheres (see Figure 3). According to Habermas, the institutional core of the private

sphere is the nuclear family, and the institutional core of the public sphere is the mass

media (*Lifeworld* 319–20). The interface between system and lifeworld is constituted by

interchange relations. Furthermore, these relations are negotiated by means of

institutionalized roles, a concept that Habermas derives from Emile Durkheim, who "uses

the phrase 'division of labor' to refer to the structural differentiation of social systems"

(*Lifeworld* 113). Thus the family interacts with the economy in the roles of employee and

consumer, and the mass media interacts with the state in the roles of client and citizen.

Habermas does not, however, explain these relationships in any depth.

Institutional orders of the lifeworld	Interchange relations	Media-steered subsystems
Private Sphere	1) Employee P' ———————→ Labor power M ←——————— Income from employment 2) Consumer M ←——————— Goods and services M' ———————→ Demand	Economic System
Public Sphere	1) Client M' ———————→ Taxes P ←——————— Organizational accomplishments 2) Citizen P ←——————— Political decisions P' ———————→ Mass loyalty	Administrative System

M = Money medium; P = Power medium

Source: Habermas, Jürgen. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume Two: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*. Trans. Thomas McCarthy. Boston, MA: Beacon, 1987. 320.

Figure 3. Relations between System and Lifeworld

As stated previously, the concept of "power to" refers to the way in which social institutions distribute the capacity to exercise power, a capacity that derives from the possession of resources. Habermas refers to resources in passing in his discussion of the cultural and social systems of action. According to him, the cultural and social systems of action are formed around ideal and worldly goods, respectively. Furthermore, he refers to the resources of meaning, solidarity, and ego identity at the levels of culture, society, and personality, relating disturbances at each of these levels to the scarcity of the respective resources. Thus the consideration of "power to" may be integrated into Habermas' theory of communicative action at the level of lifeworld and system.

Scope of Analysis

While Habermas' ultimate aim is obviously sociological—explaining modern social pathologies—his concepts of rationality and society are intriguing for theories of communication. By basing his theory of action on communication, Habermas follows Richard Rorty's suggestion that philosophy turn to hermeneutics. Habermas claims that modern philosophy is converging toward a theory of rationality that focuses on the formal conditions of rationality in knowing, reaching understanding, and acting (*Reason* 2). Thus he shifts from a philosophy of consciousness, in which a solitary subject represents or manipulates objects and events, to a philosophy of language, in which subjects achieve an intersubjective understanding through communication (*Reason* xi, 390; *Pragmatics* 186–87).

Habermas develops the concepts of communicative action, lifeworld, and system

by linking up with traditional sociological theories of societal rationalization (*Reason*

139). Following this methodological approach, he is able to show how his theory resolves

outstanding issues in previous theories of modernity as well as how it explains the

rationalization of society. However, I believe that his approach also facilitates a sort of

tunnel vision. Despite his interest in deriving universal structures by which to explain

communicative action, Habermas remains tied to previously developed structures of

society. Rather than applying his communicative perspective to the structures of society,

he maintains a Marxist emphasis on economic exchange and a Weberian emphasis on

political bureaucratization.

In contrast, I approach the theory of communicative action from a more pragmatic

perspective. While Habermas takes a formal-pragmatic approach in his initial analysis, he

abandons it in his analysis of lifeworld and system (*Lifeworld* 119). Instead, he turns to

traditional theories for deriving his concept of society, characterizing this alternative

approach as less demanding than formal pragmatics (*Reason* 138–39). However,

revisiting the derivation of his dichotomy between communicative and strategic action

from speech act theory facilitates the integration of the forms of power. Furthermore,

speech act theory may be used to illuminate his dichotomy between lifeworld and system,

an analysis that he does not undertake. As I am interested in the communicative aspects

of Habermas' theory, refocusing on pragmatics seems the most promising approach. In

my integration of the power literature and the theory of communicative action, I

concentrate on Habermas' concepts of action, lifeworld, and system, expanding them to

address asymmetrical relationships, "power over," and the unequal distribution of

resources, "power to," while emphasizing the role of communication.

Overview of Chapters

My analysis consists of two main parts. In the first part, I focus on theories of

power from sociology and political science, relying in particular on Wrong's extensive

review of the power literature. As the power theorists have not reached a consensus on

the concept of power, I focus on three main issues: (1) *What are the features of power?*,

(2) *What are the forms of power?*, and (3) *What are the bases of power?* My discussion is

organized accordingly.

In chapter two, I discuss several debates central to the development of theories of

power, which enables me to extract a working definition of power and its various

features. In general, three specific debates have shaped the literature on power. In the

community power debate, theorists have disagreed over whether power is highly

centralized in an elite or diffused throughout a community. In the zero-sum debate,

theorists have disagreed over whether power is exercised over others or is a facility for

achieving collective goals. Finally, in the debate over attribution, theorists have disagreed

over whether power is a relationship between agents or a property of a system. This

chapter provides a framework for deriving a typology of forms of power and a taxonomy

of resources.

In chapter three, I differentiate between the forms of power based on the specific

motives of the subject for obeying (Wrong 125). However, this differentiation entails that

two problems in the literature be addressed. First, although Wrong distinguishes between

the levels of interpersonal and institutionalized relations in his discussion of forms of

authority, this critical distinction is not applied consistently in the power literature.

Second, the power theorists do not consistently separate considerations of form from

considerations of content. For example, the power theorists have tended to correlate

coercion, or the threat of sanctions, with the political institution; however, this form of

power may be used in any institution. Resolving these two problems enables me to derive

a typology of forms of power consisting of an interpersonal and an institutional level. At

the interpersonal level, "power over" is the capacity of an individual or collective agent

who is able to act otherwise or to make a choice. At the institutional level, "power to" is

legitimated by cultural support or normative values. The defining characteristic of the

interpersonal level is the agent's intention, while the defining characteristic of the

institutional level is the institution's legitimacy.

In chapter four, I focus on the bases of power, or the resources that provide the

source of an agent's power. The concept of resources has been borrowed from

economics, which has primarily focused on material and, more recently, human capital.

However, other theorists, most notably Pierre Bourdieu, have argued for the

consideration of symbolic capital. Therefore, in this chapter I derive a taxonomy of

resources that includes all three forms of capital as potential sources of power. Again, I

distinguish between two levels—the level of individual resources and the level of

collective resources. In conjunction, chapters three and four articulate the power

relationship from the perspectives of the subject and the agent respectively.

In the second part of my analysis, I examine the means of power by clarifying how Habermas conceptualizes power in his theory of communicative action. In particular, I focus on two main questions: (1) *What is the basis of the distinction between communicative and strategic action?* and (2) *What is the basis of the distinction between lifeworld and system?* My discussion is organized correspondingly.

In chapter five, I address the first question, focusing on the coordination of action. Habermas claims that types of action may be differentiated according to how they are coordinated. Communicative actions are coordinated by validity claims, while strategic actions are coordinated by claims to power. In this chapter, I consider Habermas' distinction between communicative and strategic action from the perspective of intentions, effects, and coordination. Habermas derives his distinction from John Austin's speech act theory; however, as he later conceded, his adaptation diverges from common philosophical usage in several ways. The first discrepancy involves the concept of intention, a concept that remained vague in Austin's original formulation of speech act theory but has since been clarified by Searle. The second discrepancy concerns the distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, which Habermas misleadingly correlates with the distinction between actions coordinated by means of communication and actions coordinated by means of power. The third discrepancy concerns Habermas' proposed classes of linguistically mediated interactions, which groups several distinct classes of speech acts together. By addressing these divergences, I am able to replace the dichotomy of communicative and strategic action with a continuum of forms of action, thus integrating asymmetrical relations of power, "power over," into Habermas' theory.

In chapter six, I explain the direct and indirect exercise of "power over" by means of speech acts. The mediation of a direct exercise of power can be described in terms of its conditions of acceptability, or its conditions of satisfaction and conditions of validity or sanction. In both communicative and strategic action, the conditions of satisfaction stipulate that to understand the action, the hearer must know the conditions under which the mediating speech act would be fulfilled. Thus for each form of power, the conditions of satisfaction may be derived from Searle's felicity conditions for the mediating speech act. In communicative action, the conditions of validity stipulate that to understand the action, the hearer must know why the speaker views the speech act as valid. In strategic action, the conditions of sanction stipulate that to understand an action, a hearer must know why the speaker expects to impose his or her will. Thus for each form of power, the conditions of validity or sanction may be derived from Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz's descriptions of a subject's motivations for complying with an exercise of power. Because most exercises of power are indirect, I also describe the mechanism by which power may be exercised indirectly by means of communication. In conjunction, chapters five and six articulate "power over."

In chapter seven, I address the second question, focusing on the mediation of system. Habermas maintains that society should be viewed as both a lifeworld and a system. While interactions in the lifeworld are mediated by communicative actions, interactions in social systems are mediated by means of steering media. In this chapter, I consider Habermas' distinction between lifeworld and system from the perspective of integration, mediation, and structure. Habermas derives the distinction between

functional and social integration from Durkheim's work on solidarity and Parsons' systems theory. Based on the distinction between the two types of integration, he maintains that social integration occurs in the lifeworld, while functional integration applies to social systems. Next, I discuss Habermas' adaptation of Parsons' concept of generalized media, by which Habermas distinguishes between the steering media of social systems and the forms of generalized communication associated with the lifeworld. However, the concept of generalized media has been criticized by the power theorists Bliss Cartwright and Stephen Warner, who question the explanatory power of the concept. Based on their critique, I review Habermas' description of institutional structure using a more contemporary explanation of institutions. By analyzing Habermas' treatment of institutions, I am able to describe the distribution of the capacity to exercise power in terms of institutional structures, thus integrating "power to" into Habermas' theory.

In chapter eight, I discuss the structures of "power to" at the level of system. These structures are manifested in institutional structures and roles. I consider four institutions, the economy, politics, law, and science, with respect to both structures and roles. First, I focus on institutionally bound roles, by which incumbents of certain offices may change the state of a system via a declaration. Second, I consider the structures of power that replicate the patterns of interaction at the institutional level, identifying example patterns of power. In conjunction, chapters seven and eight articulate "power to."

In chapter nine, I reconsider the integrated conceptual framework in terms of the features of power identified in chapter two. In particular, I discuss how the framework addresses each of the issues under debate in the power literature. I also suggest some implications of the continuum of power for rhetorical theory, identifying several future avenues of research. I consider two avenues to be especially promising. First, rhetorical analyses may be able to provides fuller descriptions of the social systems of action. Second, rhetorical analyses may be able to reveal how declarations are used to change system states.

Sociological Concepts

The main difficulty with a discussion that crosses disciplinary boundaries is the use of field-specific concepts. Therefore, I would like to briefly define several concepts fundamental to sociological theories of action and society: action, structure, system, and institution. I rely on definitions provided by theorists who have treated these concepts in depth.

Habermas defines "action" as "those symbolic expressions with which the actor takes up a relation to at least one world (but always to the objective world *as well*)" (*Reason* 96, emphasis in original). An action always relates to the objective world because through his or her action, the actor changes something. Habermas distinguishes actions from bodily movements and other operations executed concurrently, claiming that the latter are elements of actions, not actions per se. For example, an actor may intervene in the world by way of an instrumental action, the performance of which may be accompanied by "straightening the body, spreading the hand,…" (Habermas, *Reason* 96).

An actor also may "embod[y] a meaning" or express him- or herself communicatively,

the expression of which may be accompanied by "movements of the larynx, tongue, lips,

…; nodding the head…" (Habermas, *Reason* 97). These bodily movements are

concomitantly executed—an actor intends the action but not the bodily movements

(Habermas, *Reason* 97). Operations of thought and speech also are executed

concomitantly within other actions—they do not have to do with the world directly

(Habermas, *Reason* 98).

In general, structure refers to the structuring or patterning of social relations.

Anthony Giddens distinguishes between concepts of "structure" held by functionalists

and structuralists. Functionalists view structure as the reproduction of situated practices

across time and space, while structuralists view structure as the modes of structuring

applied for that reproduction over time and space (Giddens, *Constitution* 16–17). Giddens

bases his definition of "system" on the latter of these concepts. According to him,

structure refers to the rules and resources that enable systems to be reproduced both

temporally and spatially, while system refers to social practices existing across time and

space (*Constitution* xxxi, 17). Those social practices that are most consistent across time

and space are called "institutions" (Giddens, *Constitution* 17).

Habermas relies upon Parsons' systems theory; therefore, it is useful to examine

Parsons' concept of system as well. According to Habermas, in his early and middle

formulations of action theory, Parsons adhered to a functionalist concept of system

(*Lifeworld* 225). From a functionalist perspective, a system is an ordered set of elements

that maintain existing structures: the states of the system fulfill the functions necessary

for the maintenance of the system structures (Habermas, *Lifeworld* 225). For example,

Niklas Luhmann has stated, "each of the most important subsystems of society is directed

to a specific and primary function that pertains to it alone" (*Ecological* 34). This view of

system corresponds to the definition given by Giddens above. However, Habermas

claims that in his later version of action theory, Parsons moved to a biocybernetic concept

of system (*Lifeworld* 225–26). From this view, systems are boundary-maintaining

organisms: they must maintain their boundaries in the face of a complex environment

(Habermas, *Lifeworld* 225). This view expands the concept of system to include

considerations of its complex environment.

Similarly, a more precise definition of "institution" than that given by Giddens

above is provided by Shmuel Eisenstadt. According to Eisenstadt, institutions or patterns

of institutionalization may be defined as "regulative principles which organize most of

the activities of individuals in a society into definite organizational patterns from the

point of view of some of the perennial, basic problems of any society or ordered social

life" (410). He identifies three basic aspects of institutions: the patterns of behavior that

institutions regulate deal with basic problems of a society; institutions regulate behavior

according to definite, continuous, and organized patterns; the regulation of behavior is

grounded by norms and by sanctions legitimized by the norms (409). Eisenstadt identifies

six major institutional spheres: family and kinship, education, economics, politics,

culture, and stratification (410). The institution of family and kinship regulates

reproductive relations between individuals and socializes new members (Eisenstadt 410).

The institution of education also socializes as well as transmits traditions (Eisenstadt

410). The institution of economics regulates the production, distribution, and

consumption of goods (Eisenstadt 410). The institution of politics regulates the use of

force, maintains the boundaries of society, controls the mobilization of resources, and

sets up goals for the collectivity (Eisenstadt 410). The institution of culture provides

conditions that facilitate the creation and conservation of religious, scientific, and artistic

artifacts (Eisenstadt 410). Finally, the institution of stratification regulates the distribution

of and access to positions, rewards, and resources (Eisenstadt 410).

Paul Harrison has clarified these concepts with respect to examples of specific

theories. According to him, theories of action have relied on either a model of collective

action, as in Marx's theory of class actors and class struggle, or a model of individual

acts, as in Weber's theory of subjectively meaningful action (Roberts 68). Theories of

structure have relied on either a model of a structure that constitutes meaning, as in

Marx's theoretical contention that commodity production gives rise to fetishism, or a

model of structure as itself constituted meaning, as in Emile Durkheim's theory of the

conscience collective (Roberts 68). Harrison describes the opposition between the first

two concepts, action and structure, as one of the great oppositions in sociology (Roberts

67). However, more recent theorists such as Bourdieu and Giddens have replaced this

dichotomy with theories of practice, which attempt to address both action and structure

simultaneously (Roberts 68). Finally, other theorists, such as Parsons and Luhmann, have

focused on functional systems theories that view rationality as a property of a social

system, manifested in its function (Roberts 69).

From these general definitions, it ensues that the differentiation between "power over" and "power to" corresponds to the distinction between action and structure. "Power over" refers to asymmetrical relations between actors, while "power to" refers to the unequal distribution of resources resulting from the structural properties of society. According to Wrong, theorists whose views of power fall in the category of "power to" include Parsons, Giddens, and, most recently, Foucault. In contrast, Wrong classifies Habermas' work under the category of "power over" (2). While his classification is useful, it groups the work of theorists advocating structure, practice, and system perspectives under the category of "power to," associating action theorists with the "power over" category. Furthermore, the categorization of Habermas promotes a narrow view of his theory as focused exclusively on action, but he integrates theories of action and theories of system in his theory of communicative action, as was shown above (*Reason* 141, 271).

Terminological Conventions

Finally, let me provide a few terminological definitions. In theories of power, the relation between individuals is assumed to be asymmetrical. Wrong uses the term "power holder" to refer to the individual who is exercising power and "power subject" to refer to the individual over whom power is exercised. For the sake of brevity, I use the terms "agent" and "subject" to refer to the power holder and power subject respectively. In theories of action, the relations between individuals are assumed to be symmetrical. Thus in his theory of communicative action, Habermas uses the terms "actor" or "participant" to refer to individuals who are acting and communicating. His use of these terms avoids

the implicit asymmetry of the terminology used in theories of power. Specifically, the individuals who act communicatively are equally capable of raising, criticizing, and defending validity claims. In theories of communication, the relation between individuals is indicated in terms of the direction of communication. For example, speech act theorists refer to the "speaker" and "hearer" in their discussions. In my analysis I rely on the following conventions: I use the terms "agent" and "subject" when discussing the exercise of power, "actor" and "participant" when discussing action-theoretic concepts, and "speaker" and "hearer" when discussing language-theoretic concepts.

In addition, I use P. F. Strawson's terminology when discussing sentences. Strawson distinguishes between a sentence, a use of a sentence, and an utterance of a sentence. According to him, the phrase "a sentence" refers to one and the same sentence uttered on different occasions ("On Referring" 179). Alternately, the phrase "a use of a sentence" refers to different uses of the same sentence (Strawson, "On Referring" 180). Finally, the phrase "an utterance of a sentence" refers to a sentence as spoken on a specific occasion (Strawson, "On Referring" 180). Correspondingly, I use the term "sentence" to refer to a grammatical self-contained unit in a specific language; I use the term "utterance" to refer to the saying or writing of that sentence in a specific context or place and time.

The Power Literature

As noted above, the power theorists have not reached a consensus on the specific features of power or on its forms and bases. Therefore, in next three chapters, I review

the power literature to highlight some relevant debates. While these issues are by no

means resolved, it is necessary to take a position on each before proceeding with a

clarification of Habermas' theory. Furthermore, by reviewing the current power

literature, I am able to derive both a typology of forms of power and a taxonomy of bases

of power that may be used to explicate Habermas' treatment of power.