

- [↓ Unit 9 Culture and Power](#)

INTRODUCTION

Power is generally defined as the ability to exercise authority over someone. It can be taken for granted by the person who wields it or the person who does not, or it can be a central and defining aspect of the relationship. In either case, the individual who is at the mercy of that power plays a role in the relationship as well, since power by its definition requires a receiver.

Power can be used for good or evil, unless it is allowed through some legal or official authority, in which case it is considered value-neutral. Formal responsibilities, such as the power entrusted to police officers, judges, or even tax auditors, can also be misused, in which case it is considered power gone wrong.

In public administration, power and particularly political power, can be overt, the formal authority, or covert, the influence that someone can exercise in ways that are not apparent. People can have both. Public power may not be as influential as private power, but both work together to accomplish public goals. How many times have we heard of government negotiations behind the scenes that resulted in an event, positive or negative, that was an example of power? Remember the case where former U.S. president Bill Clinton traveled to North Korea and secured the release of two journalists who had been convicted of entering the country illegally and committing "hostile acts"? Mr. Clinton's power, both overt and covert, played a significant role in the positive outcome of that situation.

Some would argue that public workers, not elected or appointed officials, wield the most power in public sector settings, because they are the constant force that continues on even when political parties change and government priorities evolve. Learning how to use power as a public benefit is an important tool for all public administrators, and in this unit, you will analyze how public administrators can use power to enhance public value in our multicultural environments.

OBJECTIVES

To successfully complete this learning unit, you will be expected to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the theories of culture, their impact on society, and their various applications in the public administration field.
2. Examine the concept of power as a value in public participation settings.
3. Discuss the importance and roles of culture in understanding how power affects the communication process for public administrators.

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Unit 9 Study 1

Studies

Readings

Use the Griswold text, *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World*, to complete the following:

- Read Chapter 8, "Culture and Power," pages 165–181.

Research

Complete the following research in preparation for this unit's discussions:

- Locate credible articles from the popular press that address issues of power and members of nondominant or diverse populations. You should try to locate materials that address positive interactions and communication as well as negative situations. Material that offers advice on how to handle power dynamics would also be useful. You will use this information in the Culture and Power discussion later in this unit, in which you will assess the appropriate uses of power in multicultural settings.

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Unit 9 Study 2

Preparation for Project Phase 3

Phase 3 of your project will be due in Unit 10. Read the directions for this assignment carefully and plan how you will meet this deadline. If you have any questions about the instructions, contact your instructor.

Conclude your review of literature relevant to your issue. Your list of references for Phase 3 will include those you previously cited in Phase 2, but should be augmented. It may include added material located through the Global Issue Resources interactive, course readings and media presentations if relevant. In

addition, the final project must include at least 12 peer-reviewed sources located from the Capella library or other sources online or in print.

Read the instructions for Phase 3 carefully and plan to meet its requirements. At minimum, you should complete a rough draft this week. Plan to complete the draft you will submit to Turnitin by early next week, so you will have time to make corrections before the final project is due.

Resources

[↓ Unit 9 Discussion 1](#)

Culture and Power

Power has both positive and negative connotations. The exercise of power can affect public participation, trust, and many other factors that affect public administration. These can either advance agendas or cause them to fail. For this discussion, reference the articles you found in this unit's first study to post your responses to the following questions about culture and power:

- What are the appropriate uses of power in public multicultural settings?
- What issues of written, verbal, and nonverbal communications are important to consider?
- What are the implications for you as a public servant and for the public administration field in general?

Response Guidelines

Read your peers' posts and respond substantively to at least one (please choose a post that has fewer responses than the rest). Compare your peer's post to yours, and include insights you have gained from the rest of the discussion. Answer the following questions in so far as they are relevant:

- Does your peer's writing contain any assumptions or faulty logic that should be questioned?
- Is it incomplete in any way?
- Can you expand upon the ideas presented or suggest variations?
- What points are made particularly well?

Resources