

Social power

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Abstract

In the present article, we discuss and compare recent theoretical and empirical contributions to the growing body of research on social power. In the last decade, five different theories on power have been proposed. These theories can be distinguished according to whether they focus on intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup or ideological processes. Our analysis leads us to claim that future theoretical contributions would have much to gain by addressing the issue of social power on multiple levels of analysis. The recent empirical work on social power suggests that powerful individuals and members of powerful groups differ from powerless individuals and members of powerless groups with regard to (a) how they perceive and judge others, (b) how they are evaluated as targets, and (c) how they behave. Those who have power perceive others more stereotypically and judge them more negatively. They also tend to take action more frequently and generally behave in a more variable manner. This difference in objective variability is further reinforced by perceivers' tendency to exaggerate the variability of high power groups. The latter two effects contribute to the phenomenon that high power groups are less often the target of stereotypes than low power groups. Copyright © 2006 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Over four decades have passed since Cartwright (1959) advocated the introduction of power in social psychological analyses of interpersonal and intergroup relations. It is in Cartwright's volume that French and Raven (1959) proposed their classic five-fold typology of power including reward, coercive, legitimate, expert and referent power (Raven, 2001). Since then, some social psychologists have addressed interpersonal power relations between individuals, especially in regard to power displays between men and women in verbal and non-verbal communication (Dovidio, Ellyson, Keating, Heltman, & Brown, 1988; LaFrance & Henley, 1994; Ng & Bradac, 1993; Reid & Ng, 1999). Other social psychologists have studied the role of power in intergroup relations and examined groups that differ in ethnicity, gender, language,

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social class and group vitality (Apfelbaum, 1979; Bourhis, 1994; Bourhis & Barrette, 2005; Fiske & Dépret, 1996; Lorenzi-Cioldi (1998), Ng, 1980). Early on, researchers found it necessary to distinguish among power, social status, and relative group size, three key sociostructural variables defining most real life intergroup relations (Sachdev & Bourhis, 1985). Given the focus on power differentials between social groups, the intergroup definition of *power* provided by Jones (1972) was seen as most relevant: power constitutes a group's control over its own fate and the fate of out-groups. Following Tajfel and Turner (1986), *social status* was defined as the relative position of groups on valued dimensions of comparison such as educational achievement, occupational status, wealth, and speech style. Sachdev and Bourhis (1984) defined *relative group size* (minorities vs. majorities) strictly in terms of the relative numerical position of group members within their particular intergroup setting. Minimal group studies showed that power, status and relative group size had both separate and combined effects on the parity and discriminatory behavior of *ad hoc* group members, thus confirming the heuristic value of distinguishing these sociostructural constructs (Sachdev & Bourhis, 1991).

CURRENT THEORIES OF INTERPERSONAL AND INTERGROUP POWER

It is only recently that researchers have attempted to build integrative theories of power relations applicable to both interpersonal and intergroup relations. Willem Doise proposed that social psychological theories tended to be formulated at four different levels of analysis that could be situated on a continuum covering the intra-personal, the inter-personal, the intergroup, and the ideological level (Doise, 1986; see Figure 1). Theories at the *intra-personal* level address how individuals cognitively and affectively organize their perceptions and evaluations of social reality, often as detached individuals not much affected by the social context in which they live. Theories at the *inter-personal* level of analysis describe the affective and cognitive processes that regulate interpersonal relations in

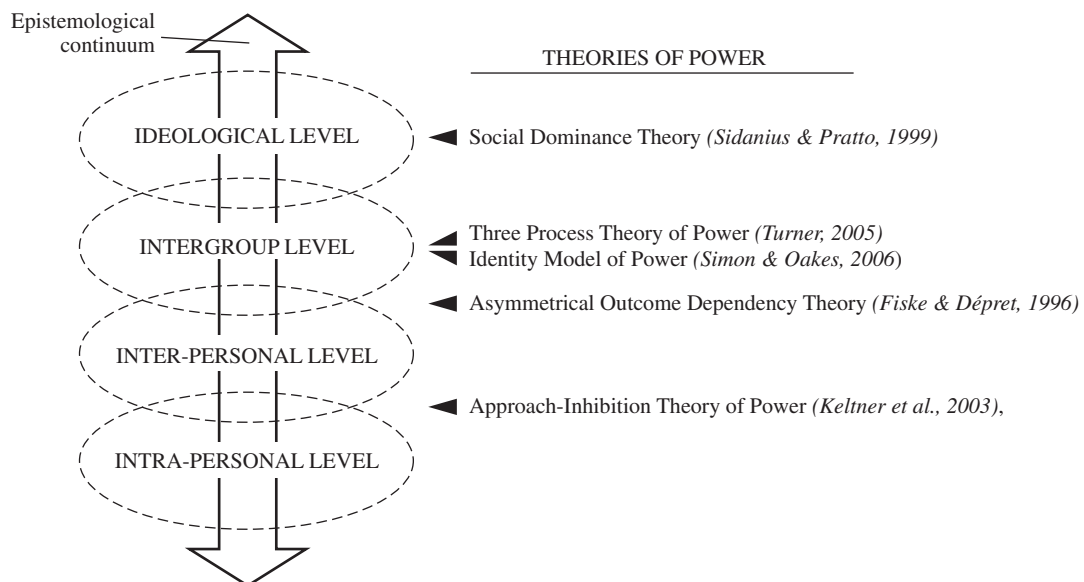


Figure 1. The four levels of analyses proposed within Doise's (1986) epistemological continuum and the location of five prominent theories of power on this continuum

dyadic and small group face-to-face encounters. Theories formulated at these first two levels of analysis—the intra-personal and inter-personal level—focus on people who act mainly as individuals. Theories at the *intergroup* level of analysis address psychological processes of individuals who think, feel and act as group members by virtue of their category membership, social identification, and their status and power position in the social structure within stratified societies. Social psychological theories formulated at the *ideological* level focus on how people construct belief systems and social representations to legitimize, perpetuate, or challenge their position in the social structure. Doise (1986) suggests that a given social psychological phenomenon should be analyzed with concepts and theories that are not restricted to only one of these levels of analysis but rather from different perspectives using all four of the complementary levels of analysis. In what follows, we will discuss current theories of social power and situate them on the continuum proposed by Willem Doise.

Approach Inhibition Theory of Power

How can one apply Doise's epistemological approach to current theories of social power? Given the space constraints of this article, we were obliged to select only a few theories. The Approach-Inhibition Theory of Power, proposed by Keltner, Gruenfeld, and Anderson (2003), addresses the influence of power on individual behavior. This theory can be situated at both the intra-personal and inter-personal level of analysis of Doise's continuum (see Figure 1). The focus on the individual is illustrated by Keltner et al.'s definition of power: '*We define power as an individual's relative capacity to modify others' states by providing or withholding resources or administering punishments.*' (pp. 265–266). Keltner and his colleagues identify individual, dyadic, within-group and between-group variables as the four main determinants of the power of an individual. It is proposed that over time high power individuals develop a cognitive style that is mainly approach-related. High power individuals are assumed to experience positive affect (such as good mood, desire, and pride), to be more attentive to social rewards, to construe others in terms of how they satisfy their own goals and needs, and to process information about their social environment in more automatic, simplistic ways. They also act in a more disinhibited manner and transgress social norms more often. Low power individuals, in contrast, are assumed to develop inhibition-related tendencies over time. They are assumed to experience negative affect (such as bad mood, fear, and shame), to attend to punishments and threat, to view the self as a means to others' ends, and to make controlled judgments about others' intentions, attitudes, and actions. They also tend to behave in a more inhibited manner, and their behavior is more contingent on the behaviors of others. The immediate research agenda inspired by the Approach-Inhibition Theory of Power is the identification of the physiological, personality, affective, cognitive and behavioral correlates of individuals occupying elevated versus reduced power positions. The ultimate goal is to better understand relations between high versus low power individuals interacting in power hierarchies found in family, educational, work, judicial, health and government settings. As it turns out, the majority of the articles included in the present volume can be situated at the intra-personal and inter-personal level of analysis of the Doise continuum. We will return to this point later.

Asymmetrical Outcome Dependency Theory

Fiske and Dépret (1996) suggested the Asymmetrical Outcome Dependency Theory of power. According to this approach, individuals or groups are powerful when their outcomes depend on others less than the others' outcomes depend on them. The authors examine the similarities and differences of the effects of power on people who act as individuals and on people who act as group members (Fiske, 1993, 2001). As

such, the theory can be situated at the inter-personal and inter-group level of Doise's continuum (see Figure 1). The core idea of Fiske and Dépret is that people have a basic need for control. Powerful individuals and members of powerful groups are in a comfortable position because they already have control. As a consequence, they can afford to do nothing, i.e., they can afford to not attend carefully to the characteristics of those whose outcomes they determine and to engage in heuristic processing. In some cases, they are motivated to maintain control, and they do this by attending to stereotype-consistent information, i.e., information that helps them justify their superior position. Powerless individuals and members of powerless groups have little control over their outcomes and are therefore motivated to restore control. They generally do this by systematically processing information about the social environment and by attending to the most diagnostic type of information, the stereotype-inconsistent information. This strategy is abandoned, however, if negative outcomes seem inevitable or intolerable (which is often the case when individuals act as group members who define themselves against a competitive or hostile out-group). In this case, members of powerless groups attempt to restore control by adopting a motivationally biased processing style that causes them to attend more to stereotype-consistent information.

Three Process Theory of Power

In his Three Process Theory of Power, Turner (2005) elaborates on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and self-categorization theory (Turner, 1987) to develop an approach to intergroup power that is based on psychological group formation. Clearly situated at the intergroup level of Doise's continuum (see Figure 1), the theory assumes that the formation of a shared social identity is a necessary precursor to social influence strategies. '*Group identity unifies and empowers people by giving them a common self-interest and vantage point. It produces influence and influence enables a group to act as a unified, coordinated, organized body. Group identity and influence give people the power of collective action and cooperative endeavor; a power to affect the world and pursue shared goals much greater than any member wield in isolation.*' (Turner, 2005, p. 13.). With social influence as the basis of power, Turner reverses the causal order of the theoretical constructs. Most theories assume that power confers the capacity to exert influence over others, and that social influence plays a central role in the formation of groups. Turner, however, considers power to be the consequence of influence, and influence in turn to be caused by psychological group formation. He focuses on three social influence processes: persuasion, authority, and coercion. Persuasion refers to the capacity to convince people, especially in-group members, that a given decision is right and valid. Authority is control based on in-group norms and the right to control others, especially in-group members. Coercion is the attempt to control others against their will, if necessary by force. Presumably, force is more likely to be used against out-group than in-group others. Turner insists on the fact that the use of coercion can become divisive, destabilizing and even counter-productive as a means of exerting control in both intra-group and inter-group contexts. Coercion undermines the impact of persuasion and authority, thus fostering resistance and the emergence of a countervailing power as the target of coercion develops a collective identity distinct from that of the coercive agent. By focusing on the interplay of persuasion, authority and coercion the three-process theory offers an intergroup approach to the exercise of power and the control of valued resources by in-group and out-group members.

Identity Model of Power

Recently, Simon and Oakes (2006) proposed the Identity Model of Power, which is also based on social identity theory and self categorization theory. Situated at the intergroup level of Doise's continuum, the

Identity Model of Power proposes that power should be seen not only as a conflictual coercive force but also as a consensual productive and organizing force. While they agree with many points raised by Turner (2005), Simon and Oakes are distinct in their sustained critique of Fiske and Dépret's (1996) Asymmetric Outcome Dependency Theory of power: '*The problem with this dependence account is that it stops just where the interesting questions begin—what constitutes a social reward (or punishment), to whom, when and why?*' (p. 5). According to Simon and Oakes, power is not control of people's outcomes but the control of people's active contributions or inputs. In other words, individuals or groups possess power when they have the capacity to direct others' efforts toward their own projects. Power has to do with the powerholder's capacity to 'recruit agency' by other free social actors. According to this framework, extremely coercive relationships in which some of the social actors are not free (e.g., slavery) do not really involve power. As a consequence, a common social identity is assumed to be a precondition for power to occur. Powerholders exert their power by getting others to have the desires they want them to have and by manipulating social identities. In Simon and Oakes' approach, the typical powerholder is not a violent, coercive dictator but an 'entrepreneur of identity' who recruits human agency by encouraging some identities and marginalizing others.

Social Dominance Theory

Social Dominance Theory was developed by Sidanius and Pratto over the last decade (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Its goal is to understand the social psychological processes involved in the establishment and maintenance of group-based social hierarchy. Sidanius and Pratto suggest that group-based hierarchy fostering inequality is a universal and recurrent characteristic of human social organizations. Dominant groups command disproportionately large quantities of valued resources such as material goods, wealth and health, while subordinated groups are allocated negative social values such as poverty, poor health and lack of control over their destiny. It is proposed that group conflicts and oppression such as sexism, classism, and racism are driven by human dispositions for group-based hierarchy. Social dominance theory also proposes that while hierarchy-enhancing forces promote group-based inequality, counterbalancing hierarchy-attenuating forces promote group-based equality. *Social dominance orientation* (SDO) was initially proposed as an individual difference variable measured with the validated SDO scale (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). Individuals with a high social dominance orientation tend to believe that society is necessarily stratified and that group members at the top of the hierarchy deserve their dominant position while group members at the bottom of the stratification deserve their subordinate position. Individuals with low social dominance orientation tend to endorse egalitarian ideologies, show empathy for lower status others, and promote group-based equality. Studies have shown a reliable relationship between social dominance orientation on the one hand, and prejudice, racism, and discriminatory behavior on the other hand (Amiot & Bourhis, 2005a; Pratto & Shih, 2000). Sidanius and Pratto (1999, 2003) posit that differences in social dominance orientation are multi-determined as a function of differential socialization, individual temperament/personality, gender and individual position within group-based social hierarchies. Social dominance theory suggests that dominant and high status members who strongly identify with their own group will more strongly endorse a social dominance orientation than members of subordinated and low status groups. Given that social dominance orientation was initially conceived of as a stable personality trait reflecting people's general orientation toward group-based inequality, one could situate Social Dominance Theory at the interpersonal level of Doise's (1986) continuum. However, recent studies have found that people's social dominance orientation is contextually sensitive depending on the concepts that are made salient just before participants fill out the SDO scale (Huang & Liu, 2005; Schmitt, Branscombe, & Kappen, 2003). Consequently, an increasing number of researchers

think that social dominance orientation may be more adequately understood in terms of ideological beliefs than in terms of a stable personality trait (Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt, Wagner, du Plessis, & Birum, 2002; Guimond, Dambrun, Michinov, & Duarte, 2003). Such considerations have given rise to a debate about how Social Dominance Theory is related to Social Identity Theory (Sidanius, Pratto, van Laar, & Levin, 2004; Turner & Reynolds, 2003), again testifying to the central role of power in social relationships. Taking into account the most recent developments in Social Dominance Theory and associated frameworks such as System Justification Theory (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004), we would suggest that Social Dominance Theory is situated at the ideological end of the Doise continuum (see Figure 1).

Taken together, Approach-Inhibition Theory of Power (Keltner et al., 2003), Asymmetrical Outcome Dependency Theory (Fiske & Dépret, 1996), the Three Process Theory of Power (Turner, 2005), the Identity Model of Power (Simon & Oakes, 2006), and the Social Dominance Theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) provide a rich theoretical environment that allows social psychologists to categorize and evaluate empirical studies on power. The stage is set for a long overdue theoretical and empirical debate about the nature of power and its links to both interpersonal and intergroup relations. The empirical articles presented in this thematic issue provide only a few hints about the likely direction of this debate. As it turns out, most articles submitted to and published in this special issue on social power address research questions related to the interpersonal level of Doise's continuum. We lack sufficient hindsight to say if this focus on interpersonal processes is a general trend in power research, or if this is a mere coincidence. Many researchers may find it more convenient to run individual participants rather than groups of participants. Also, it is easier to manipulate individual power rather than group power in the laboratory. It should be noted, however, that past and recent empirical contributions have examined social power at an intergroup level of analysis (Amiot & Bourhis, 2005b; Brewer & Brown, 1998; Bruins, Ellemers, & deGilder, 1999; Hornsey, Spears, Cremers, & Hogg, 2003; Ng & Cram, 1988; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1991). The most recent theoretical contributions presented above (Simon & Oakes, 2006; Turner, 2005;) also focus on intergroup power. It therefore seems premature to speculate about trends in research on social power simply based on the articles in this volume. We think that future empirical studies have much to gain in addressing social power processes using multiple theoretical perspectives combining not only intra-personal, interpersonal and intergroup levels of analysis, but also the ideological dimension.

CURRENT RESEARCH ON INTERPERSONAL AND INTERGROUP POWER

Early studies showed that powerful individuals tended to become corrupt in that they adopted, through the repeated exercise of power, a more vainglorious view of themselves and despised the less powerful (Kipnis, 1976). Other studies showed that powerful individuals were particularly likely to stereotype subordinated others (Fiske, 1993). In recent years, there has been a profusion of empirical research dealing with interpersonal and intergroup power. Some of this research challenges the results of the early studies. For instance, Overbeck and Park (2001) showed that high-power individuals were more likely to individuate rather than stereotype powerless others when the situation demanded that the power-holder take responsibility for the welfare of another person. Chen, Lee-Chai, and Bargh (2001) showed that power decreases racism when the perceiver has a communal relationship orientation. In what follows, we will review recent empirical work on power, including the nine empirical papers published in this special issue. Our goal is to draw general conclusions about the cognitive, affective and behavioral consequences of power. As we will show below, having or not having power affects (a) how people perceive and judge others, (b) how they are judged by others, and (c) how they act in a

variety of interpersonal and intergroup situations. In what follows, we will briefly discuss each of these effects. When talking about 'the powerful' we refer to powerful individuals and members of powerful groups, whereas the term 'the powerless' refers to low power individuals and members of low power groups.

The Powerful and the Powerless as Perceivers/Judges

Members of powerful groups are known to evaluate out-groups more negatively and to display greater in-group bias than members of powerless groups (Figure 2). For example, when power is manipulated in a minimal group paradigm, dominant group members discriminate more against subordinate out-groups than subordinate groups discriminate against dominant out-groups. This holds true for mixed sex, same sex, and opposite sex groups (Bourhis, 1994; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1985). These studies also show that members of no power groups do not discriminate at all against a dominant out-group, demonstrating that usable power is a necessary condition for effective discrimination. Winning under competitive conditions significantly enhances in-group bias on evaluative traits (Ryan & Kahn, 1975). A number of mediating mechanisms have been suggested for this effect. Guimond et al. 2003 showed that the random assignment of participants to a high-power position rather than a low-power position increases their social dominance orientation, which in turn causes them to be more prejudiced towards low status out-groups. Other researchers suggested that relative power influences the perceived legitimacy of the power difference, which in turn affects the evaluation of out-groups (Sidanius, 1993). Vescio, Gervais, Heidenreich, and Snyder (2006) identified an interesting moderating effect. They demonstrate that individuals in high power roles are most likely to derogate members of low power out-groups when they are prejudiced and when they adopt a weakness-focused social influence strategy. In other words, being in a position of power is particularly likely to lead to negative appraisals of subordinates belonging to a low power out-group when the superior has a negative attitude toward the

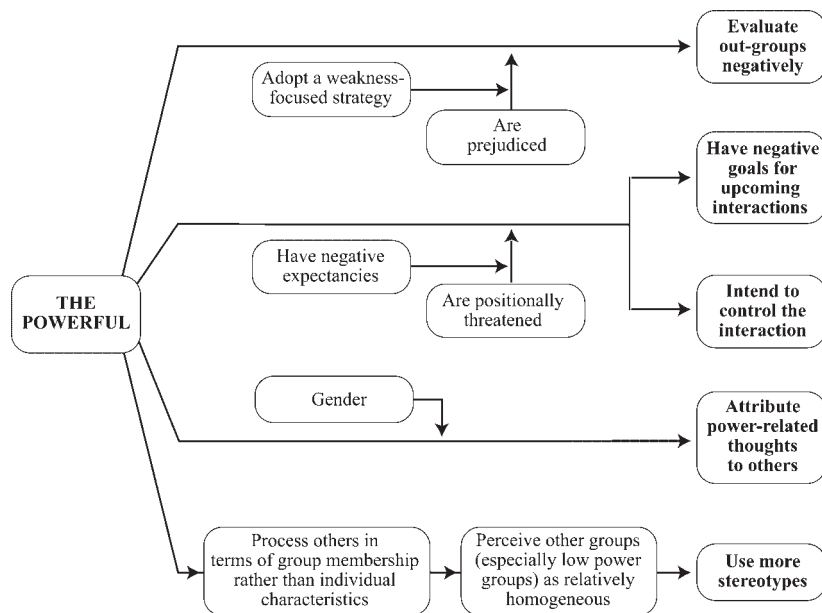


Figure 2. The powerful and the powerless as perceivers/judges

out-group to begin with and, in addition, when his or her goal is to identify the weaknesses and limitations in the skills of these subordinates. This work is helpful in thinking about measures to reduce prejudice. It may be difficult to influence people's power position in a hierarchy or their initial level of prejudice. However, it is possible to modify the social influence strategy. The detrimental effect of power and initial prejudice level on the evaluation of subordinates is significantly reduced if people are instructed to adopt a strength-focused influence strategy, i.e., when their goal is to identify the strengths that others bring to work settings.

Georges and Harris (2006) also examined superior-subordinate relationships in the work setting. They found that power holders' perceptions and evaluations are influenced by the security of the power position (whether their power position was secure or threatened) and by the valence of their expectations about the subordinate (whether they expected to work with a subordinate who was high or low in ability). In general, individual power holders whose power position was threatened had the strongest reactions. When they worked with a subordinate who had been described as low in ability they evaluated the interaction most negatively, they had the most negative thoughts, they believed most strongly that they deserved to be the boss, and they gave the smallest monetary reward to the subordinate. When they interacted with a subordinate who had been described as high in ability they had the greatest intention to control the interaction and felt most anxious about being evaluated. Being in an insecure power position is thus likely to lead to negative interactions with subordinates.

This finding is nicely complemented by the work by Schmid-Mast, Hall, and Ickes (2006). These researchers categorized participants into two groups, depending on whether the individuals preferred to be in a high power or a low power position when given the choice. They then asked participants to estimate the occurrence of power-related thoughts in a target person shown on a video-tape. Individuals had a general tendency to over-estimate the occurrence of power-related thoughts in others. The size of the over-estimation bias depended on power preference and gender, however. Participants with a preference for the high power position over-estimated the occurrence of power-related thoughts more than individuals with a preference for the low power position. This effect was entirely driven by the male participants. For female individuals, power preference was unrelated to the size of the over-estimation bias.

Social power also affects the perceived variability of in-groups and out-groups. The general tendency to perceive out-groups as more homogeneous than in-groups (the 'out-group homogeneity bias,' see Judd & Park, 1988) seems to be moderated by the relative power of the perceiver's in-group. Members of high power groups appear to apply the homogeneity bias to a greater extent than do members of low power groups (Devos, Comby, & Deschamps, 1996). Simon and Brown (1987) suggested that this difference is due to a difference in perceived threat. For these authors, being a member of a disadvantaged group is a threatening experience. Exaggerating the similarity in the in-group allows minority members to have the impression that they are part of a cohesive group that is able to defend itself against the dominance of the advantaged out-group. Being a member of an advantaged group, however, requires no particular strategy to deal with one's social identity. Members of advantaged groups simply apply the standard out-group homogeneity bias. Although there is still some debate about the underlying mechanism, it is likely that high power individuals indeed apply the out-group homogeneity bias to a greater extent than individuals belonging to groups with little power.

The Powerful and the Powerless as Targets

The relative power position of a group affects not only the way its members perceive others but also how the group is perceived by others (see Figure 3). Some studies suggest that members of powerful groups are evaluated more positively than members of low power groups. In a review, Hinkle and

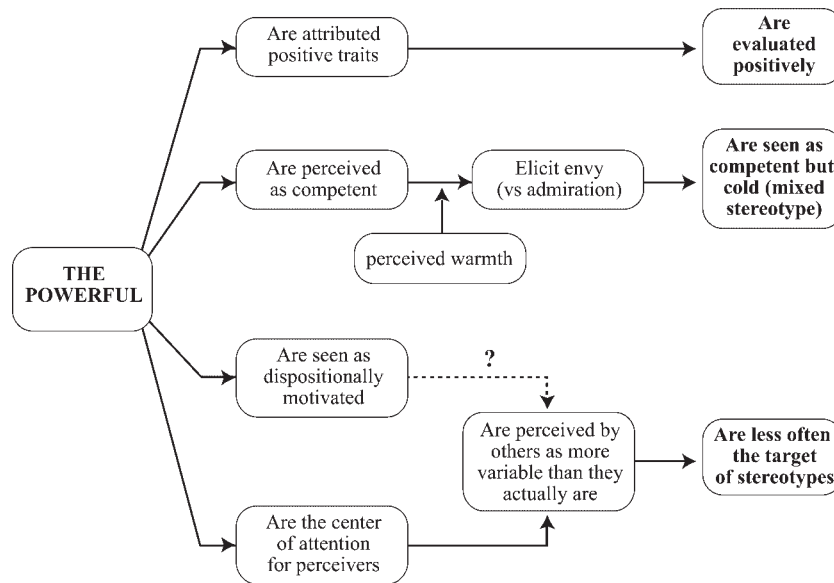


Figure 3. The powerful and the powerless as targets

Brown (1990) came to the conclusion that perceivers generally attribute more positive traits and less negative traits to high-power than to low-power groups, independently of the power position of the perceiver's in-group (see also Tiedens, Ellsworth, & Mesquita, 2000). The mechanism responsible for this effect is not yet clear. System justification theorists suggest that most people are motivated to legitimize existing social arrangements and, as a consequence, they attribute positive traits to high-power groups (Jost et al., 2004). Others would argue that this finding is an instance of the famous 'halo effect,' according to which perceivers go 'beyond the information given' and attribute positive traits to those who belong to successful and powerful groups in society (Brauer, 2002). Finally, it could be that this effect is partly based on reality when natural groups and specific traits are involved. For example, it could be that prison guards are actually more 'honest' than prison inmates (van Knippenberg, Blaauw, & Vermunt, 1996). In a recent line of work, Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, and Xu (2002) argued that most perceivers have a mixed stereotype of powerful group members. Most powerful group members are seen as competent but whether this perception of competence is accompanied by positive affect depends on the perceived warmth of the group. Warm powerful groups elicit admiration whereas cold powerful groups elicit envy. In a series of studies involving both ethnic and national groups in a variety of countries, Fiske and her colleagues showed that most powerful groups are seen as competent but cold, and tend to elicit envy in the perceivers. Powerless groups in contrast are generally seen as incompetent but warm, and elicit pity in the perceivers.

The extent to which a given target group is seen as homogeneous or heterogeneous also depends on the group's relative power position in the social hierarchy. Lorenzi-Cioldi (1998) conducted a series of studies in which he manipulated participants' group membership and the status of the in-group relative to the out-group. There was a general tendency for participants to perceive the groups with the higher relative status as more variable than the group with the lower relative status. This effect occurred despite the fact that the information that the experimenter gave to participants about the two groups was equivalent with regard to homogeneity and was counterbalanced across participants. Guinote and Fiske (2002) replicated this finding in a study in which they explicitly manipulated the social power of the groups.

There are two likely explanations for this effect. Overbeck, Tiedens, and Brion (2006) showed that we tend to make dispositional attributions for the behaviors of high power individuals but situational attributions for the behaviors of low power individuals. The ‘fundamental attribution error’—our tendency to insufficiently take into account situational forces when interpreting the behaviors of others—is stronger with high power than with low power targets. Although this finding is most interesting in itself, it also has important implications for other research. The research conducted by Overbeck et al. suggests that we consider the behaviors of high power individuals as diagnostic, i.e., we think that these behaviors tell us something about the actor’s personality and individual characteristics. When dealing with members of a high power group, we see them as individuals and treat them in terms of individual characteristics. However, we tend to consider the behaviors of low power individuals as non-diagnostic. Given that these behaviors are seen primarily as driven by situational forces, we think that they do not reveal much about the actor’s personality. When dealing with members of a low power group, we have the impression that we deal with people whose personal characteristics we know very little about. As a consequence, we treat them in terms of their group membership.

Another possible explanation for the fact that we overestimate the variability of high power groups and to underestimate the variability of low power groups is that high power groups are the center of attention for perceivers. Those who succeeded are more interesting than those who did not. After Italy won the 2006 soccer world cup, the media reported stories about the Italian national team, e.g., its history, its most important games during the championship, and portraits of its most successful players. Media audiences would probably have been less interested in receiving information about the losing team. People seem to be interested in what it takes to succeed and to attain power in a given social context (Deschamps, 1982). For this reason, perceivers process members of powerful groups in terms of individual characteristics rather than group membership, and perceive these groups as more variable than they actually are.

The two explanations are not mutually exclusive. It could be that we tend to see high power groups as more variable than they actually are both because we tend to make dispositional attributions for the behaviors of high power individuals and because members of high power groups tend to attract our attention. Independent of where the difference in perceived variability comes from, the consequence is that members of high power groups are less often the target of stereotypes than members of low power groups (see Lorenzi-Cioldi, 2002, for a full account of this theoretical position).

The Powerful and the Powerless as Actors

What are the kind of behaviors that characterize powerful/powerless individuals and members of powerful/powerless groups? Keltner et al. (2003) suggested that individuals in powerful positions display less behavioral inhibition than powerless individuals (Figure 4). Elevated power leads to less inhibited flirtatious behavior (Keltner, Young, Heerey, Oemig, & Monarch, 1998) and increased gestural activity (Ellyson & Dovidio, 1985). When asked to introduce themselves, members of high power groups talk longer, describe themselves in more abstract dispositional terms, and mention more interests and activities than members of low-power groups (Guinote, Judd, & Brauer, 2002). Individuals in whom a high-power mind-set has been activated are more likely to take action to remove an obtrusive object (in this case: an annoying fan) than individuals in a low-power mind-set (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003). Social power enhances the self-serving behavior of exchange-oriented individuals and the altruistic behavior of communally-oriented individuals (Chen et al., 2001).

Berdahl and Martorana (2006) show that high power individuals display more emotions (especially positive emotions) than low power individuals when discussing a controversial issue with others. High power individuals also express their opinions more openly. Anderson and Galinsky (2006) provide

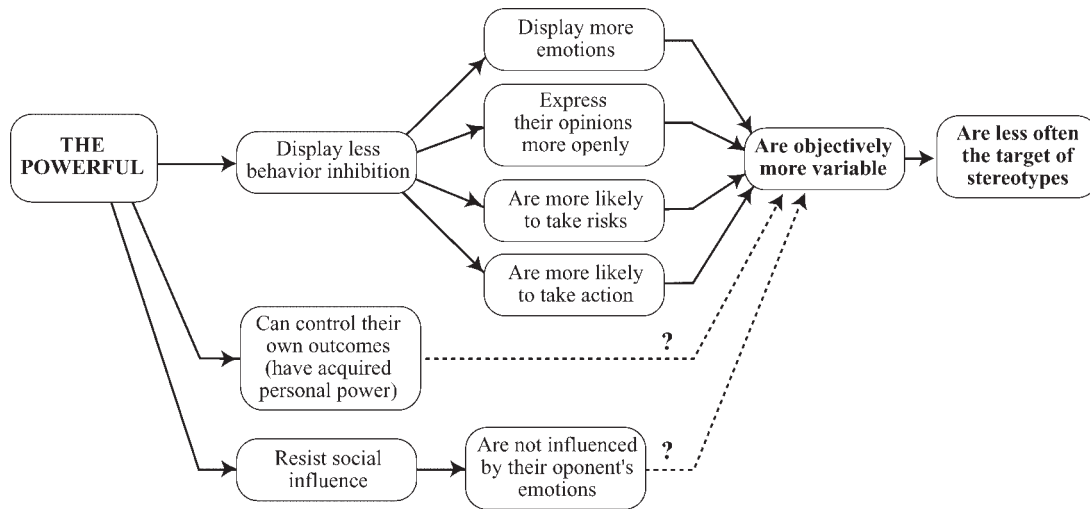


Figure 4. The powerful and the powerless as actors

empirical evidence for the idea that high power individuals are more likely to take risks than low power individuals. More precisely, they demonstrate that a high power position increases optimism in risk perception, in that positive risky events are seen as more probable and negative ones as less probable. This optimism, in turn, causes high power individuals to act in a more risk-seeking fashion.

These findings suggest that members of powerful groups should be objectively more variable than members of less powerful groups. A group whose members are relatively disinhibited, who display more emotions, express their opinions more openly, and who are willing to engage in risky behaviors will be more heterogeneous than a group whose members do not possess these characteristics. Brauer (2001) found support for this idea by showing that doctors and lawyers were perceived to be more heterogeneous than waiters and hair dressers by both in-group and out-group judges. Karasawa, Karasawa, and Hirose (2002) replicated this finding in a study in which participants were randomly assigned to high- and low-power groups. More direct evidence comes from Guinote et al. (2002) who created high- and low-power groups in the laboratory and asked observers to evaluate the groups' variability. Even when observers did not know the relative power of the two groups, there was a general tendency to view the members of the high power groups as more variable than the members of the low-power groups. In a recent study, Chappé, Brauer, and Castano (2004) showed that high power individuals are more variable in their preferences, habits, and behaviors than low power individuals.

There are a number of other psychological processes that might be responsible for the relationship between group power and intra-group variability. Van Dijke and Poppe (2006) show that individuals strive to increase the power differential between themselves and others. Most importantly, this strive for power is not a desire to increase one's *social power*—the capacity to control others—but a strive for *personal power*—the capacity to control one's own outcomes and not to be controlled by others. In other words, if individuals want power it is mostly in order to be able to act in agreement with their preferences and desires and not to be obliged to adjust their behaviors to others and/or to social norms. Van Kleef, De Dreu, Pietroni, and Manstead (2006) come to a similar conclusion. They show that low power negotiators, but not high power negotiators, are influenced by their opponent's emotions, i.e., low power negotiators yield more to an opponent displaying anger than to one displaying happiness. This is what interpersonal power is about: power gives people the capacity to resist the influence of

others and to behave according to their internal states. Not surprisingly, individuals with elevated power transgress social norms more often. For example, Ward and Keltner (as cited in Keltner et al., 2003) found that randomly assigned group leaders in three-person groups were more likely to help themselves to cookies with abandon, eating more cookies, chewing with their mouths open, and spewing crumbs left and right.

Individuals in high power position and members of powerful groups are thus characterized by increased behavior disinhibition, a greater tendency to take action in a risk-seeking fashion, to exhibit greater expressiveness of emotions (especially positive ones), to avoid being controlled by others, and to have the capacity to resist the influence of others. This may well be why high power individuals are objectively more variable than low-power group members. It is likely that perceivers detect this difference in variability at least partially, and perceive greater heterogeneity in high power group members than in low power group members. As a result, members of high power groups are less often the target of stereotypes than members of low power groups.

CONCLUSION

When one considers the empirical contributions published in recent years and in the present thematic issue, it becomes clear that social power affects interpersonal and intergroup relations in a variety of ways. As perceivers/judges, the powerful endorse a social dominance orientation, are more prejudiced and have more stereotypic perceptions of others than the powerless. As targets, the powerful are often seen as competent and hardworking. Given that their behavior is seen as dispositionally motivated and that they tend to attract perceivers' attention, they generally are also perceived as more heterogeneous than members of powerless groups. As actors, the powerful tend to behave in a more idiosyncratic, risky, and variable manner than the powerless. This difference in actual variability enhances the perceived difference in variability even further. Given that perceptual biases and reality constraints cause perceivers to view powerful individuals as more heterogeneous, stereotypes are less readily applied to members of powerful groups than to members of powerless groups.

In the preceding discussion, we have voluntarily adopted a wide definition of social power. We implicitly assumed that being able to determine others' outcomes, evaluating others, controlling resources, enjoying high power, and being the winner of a competitive encounter can affect interpersonal and intergroup processes in similar ways. The work by Hall, Murphy, and Carney (2006) suggests that this assumption may be wrong. These authors compared individuals who were outcome dependent to those who were evaluatively dependent on others, and showed that the two types of dependencies (both resulting in powerlessness) create psychologically different effects. Outcome dependent individuals were motivationally uninvested and had negative feelings. Evaluatively dependent individuals reported mostly positive affect, smiled and gazed most, and reported the strongest motives to make a good impression. Future research will determine the exact circumstances under which these different aspects of being powerful/powerless do and do not produce the same effects.

In the first section of this article, we provided a tentative overview of current theories of social power and situated them at the intra-personal, inter-personal, intergroup, or ideological level of analysis. The pluralistic epistemological approach advocated by Doise (1986) reminds us that theoretical and empirical efforts focused on a single level of analysis are likely to produce a unidimensional and restricted understanding of a given phenomenon. The challenge of future research is to examine power at various levels of analysis, as all levels are complementary and necessary to provide a true social psychological understanding of social power. As it turns out, most articles published in this thematic

issue focus on the interpersonal aspect of power. We are confident that the articles published in this thematic issue will be complemented by empirical and conceptual contributions situated at other levels of analysis. Being convinced that social power is one of the key variables in social psychological research, we hope that this thematic issue will provide synergy for future research. We believe that the adoption of a pluralistic epistemological approach has the potential to produce a *social psychological* analysis of power that is as distinctive and compelling as the conceptual contributions already valued in philosophy, sociology, and political science.

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