

CHAPTER 1

Concepts and Historical Perspectives on Power

Jennifer R. Overbeck

To understand what is meant when we use the term *power*, it might be useful to begin with an example. But a challenge immediately arises: What is the representative example to use when thinking about power? Is it a king, ruling over a kingdom? Is it a mother, telling her child not to continue his tantrum? Is it the chair of a Congressional committee, who ensures that the measure she dislikes never makes it onto the committee's agenda? Is it better to think about a platoon leader who navigates a path through a hazardous area with his men, keeping them all alive, minimizing danger to bystanders, and reaching the building that was his goal; or should we instead think of a platoon leader who lands in My Lai, Vietnam, and effects the massacre of an entire civilian village? Should we consider Hitler . . . or Gandhi . . . or Bill Gates?

The challenges for a unitary social psychology of power are clear. In order to understand the effects of power on those who hold it and those who are subject to it, we must have some agreement about what "it" is. Philosophers at least as far back as Plato began to grapple with what we mean by "power," and their work has continued energetically to this day. Despite all this energy, though, every discipline has failed to agree upon a unified definition of *power*.

Social psychology has recently seen a vigorous expansion of research on how "power" affects a number of different processes and outcomes,

including social attention and perception (Copeland, 1994; Fiske, 1993; Goodwin, Gubin, Fiske, & Yzerbyt, 2000; Guinote, 2007a, 2007b; Overbeck & Park, 2001, 2006; Vescio, Snyder, & Butz, 2003), social cognition (Guinote, Chapter 5, this volume; Smith & Trope, 2006); affect and emotion (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Keltner, Gruenfeld, Galinsky, & Kraus, Chapter 6, this volume; Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003), action orientation (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003; Magee, 2009), propensity for risk (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006), and influence of dispositions versus situations (Chen, Lee-Chai, & Bargh, 2001; Overbeck, Tiedens, & Brion, 2006; Weick & Guinote, 2008). It may be noted that some of these outcomes are explicitly social in themselves—for example, social perception and social cognition. Others are explicitly intrapersonal—for example, self-regulation and emotion. Others span both levels of analysis. These disparate strands of inquiry often produce insights that are inconsistent or even contradictory; not surprising, given not only the range of outcome measures but also the complexity of the power construct itself.

Indeed, *power* is a single label used to refer to a range of intrapsychic and interpersonal phenomena, and the focal phenomenon in one study may not be identical to that in another. Thus, to begin to integrate across these various lines of inquiry, it is important to begin by considering in greater depth what power is and how we speak of it. First and foremost, a social psychology of power must clearly be concerned with how *individuals* and *individuals within social units* experience power, since this is the level of analysis of the discipline. At the same time, it is important to recognize that *social power* is an explicitly relational construct. One person cannot have power without others to be subordinate. As discussed below, this poses some challenges for perspectives that assume power inheres in a single person. Second, we can identify a limited set of regularities among conceptualizations of power, then place our work within these regularities. Although power may be a less fixed construct in our studies than we would like, we can at least begin to map the ways in which effects covary with the view of power employed.

This chapter first offers a broad review of historical concepts and definitions, tracing the development of power concepts from quantitative capacity to consent to identity, and discussing the distinction between the domain of interest (social power) and the domain of *personal* power, often overlooked by psychology. The second section ponders the purpose and exercise of power by contrasting views of power that emphasize domination and coercion, and those that emphasize functional group structures and processes. The final section provides a brief overview of findings that appear to identify robust, universal effects of social power, and considers how a broader approach to the social psychological study of power may enrich the field.

WHAT IS POWER AND WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

This section has two aims: first, to trace the development of theories and definitions of power; and second, to point out a domain of power—personal power—largely overlooked in social psychology. This material should help lay the groundwork for a consensual understanding of what we mean when we say we study “power.”

We begin with an overview of definitions of *social power* from diverse sources, from sociology to political science to psychology. The definitions are grouped by conceptual similarity rather than chronology. They proceed from *quantitative capacity* views, which emphasize the amount of power one possesses and include the dependence-based views most common in social psychology; to *consent-based* views, which emphasize the necessity of subordinates’ endorsement for power to be stable and potent; to *identity-based* views, which argue that power derives from important processes of social identification. A large number of theories are presented, with emphasis on establishing domains of conceptual similarity among them.¹

Quantitative Capacity Perspectives

Many conceptions of social power treat it as a personal characteristic, emphasizing the individual’s possession of a certain amount of power. To use the broadest possible definition, power is the ability to get what one wants, or “the production of intended effects” (Russell, 1938; see also Hobbes, 1651/1968; Giddens, 1984); that is, one has power if one is able to obtain desired outcomes and to make things happen the way one wants. If you want the not-yet-published Harry Potter manuscript, you obtain it (Weisberger, 2003). If you want to rouse your outnumbered troops to launch a suicidal attack on your enemy, they surge forth (Shakespeare, 1499).

Weber (1946) extended and refined the definition, making it more explicitly social: in Weber’s view, *power* is “the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests” (p. 152; cited in Ng, 1980). This definition has become quite dominant in sociology and has been echoed by Dahl (1957) and Mills (1959), who emphasize the individual’s capacity to exert will regardless of others’ resistance.

What all of these approaches share is a view of power as a quantitative capacity that inheres in an individual. It is as if we could measure a certain physical volume (say, 250 cc) of power residing within the person. If power were quantitative, then we might argue that when someone with 250 ccs of

power meets someone with 200 cc, the first person is powerful. But when that person meets someone with 300 cc of power, then the new person is powerful. To identify power, we need only list the resources and attributes of various individuals (or institutions), and the relative ranking of the lists determines power (Hindess, 1996).

Social psychological theories of social power often reflect the quantitative-capacity perspective; specifically, they posit that the relative dependence of two or more parties constitutes the primary driver of power differences. Specifically, the *amount* of Party A's dependence on Party B is compared with the *amount* of Party B's dependence on Party A, and the individual with the lower net dependence is considered the high-power party.

The main intellectual forebears of current social psychological approaches to power originated in the 1950s. Thibaut and Kelley (1959), who developed the Party A–Party B comparison just presented, argued that there are two forms of power, *fate control* (control over the outcomes of another person) and *behavior control* (control over another person's actions). French and Raven (1959; Raven, 1965; Raven, Schwarzwald, & Koslowsky, 1998) outlined a list of the resources that may confer power to an actor; that is, if one has the right characteristics, position, knowledge, or ability to inflict pleasure or pain, then others may (willingly or not) become dependent on that person given the resource holder's capacity to affect them. Again, this framework suggests that the relative *amount* of these resources defines the individual's power.

Both fate control and the French and Raven (1959) power bases have led directly to today's modal *power* definition: that social power reflects "outcome control" (Dépret & Fiske, 1993; Keltner et al., 2003). All these views conceive of social *power* as separate from actual *influence* (it is potential, not necessarily realized; it is consequential, not merely controlling; it requires intent; see Dépret & Fiske, 1993). The *outcome control* definition is useful for psychologists because of its tractability and relatively bounded scope. It is easily manipulated in a laboratory setting and is well suited to meeting the need for experimental control.

Another influential dependence-based approach to power is the *resource dependence theory* (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; see also Emerson, 1962). Though developed largely as a theory of organizational power, focusing on the intergroup level, it has been generalized by many other researchers to the individual level as well (cf. Molm, Quist, & Wiseley, 1994; Lee & Tiedens, 2001; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977). The theory argues that Group or Person A has power when A possesses a resource on which B is dependent, and B cannot substitute a different resource for the one possessed by A. Like several other theories, resource dependence theory (and its interpersonal equivalent, *strategic contingency theory*; Hickson,

Hinings, Lee, Schneck, & Pennings, 1971) emphasizes the dependence of the powerless party.

A challenge for all of the dependence-based theories is that they tend to foster a pure quantitative–capacity perspective on power effects. For example, Kipnis (1972) found more “corrupt” patterns of interpersonal behavior—more use of harsh tactics, less appreciation of subordinates, less interest in knowing subordinates as people—for power holders who were given reward and punishment powers relative to those with only legitimate power.² This suggests that there may be important *qualitative* differences from one manifestation of power to the next, and these may affect how others react to that power. However, dependence theories, which posit that each of these bases—reward, punishment, and legitimacy—may be a separate and independent source of power, might suggest that the differences are driven by *amount* of power.

The flaws in such a conception are obvious. Power is indeed based on one’s balance of resources and characteristics (cf. Emerson, 1962; French & Raven, 1959; Pfeffer, 1992; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Raven, 1965), but it also depends on factors such as *others’* resources and characteristics, one’s ability to exercise power effectively, situational constraints, and the scope of power possessed; that is, power is a relative, and not absolute, capacity. It is better regarded as a property of relationships than a property of individuals given that the same individuals may enjoy very high power in some contexts and rather low power in others (Van Ogtrop, 2003).

However, psychological studies of power have tended to obscure the relationality inherent in the dependence-based approaches. This occurs partly due to psychology’s individual level of analysis and the challenges of empirically studying relational structures. In addition, psychology has tended to study the extreme case of completely asymmetrical power, in which the powerless party is dependent upon the powerful, but the powerful is independent. For example, Fiske’s (1993) Power As Control model posits that organizational power holders do not depend on subordinates for their own outcomes, even though power relations in many organizations are actually reciprocal, in that power holders’ compensation is directly tied to subordinates’ performance. This approach is very well suited to isolating effects of *power* from other relational features. However, in contrast to this common social psychological approach, some basic definitions of power from other disciplines (e.g., Foucault, 1986; Hamilton & Biggart, 1985) hold that social power is only interesting in situations of mutual dependence—that is, when one party may have access to resources that give rise to authority or dominance, but still relies on the other party for satisfaction of its own outcomes. I turn next to a discussion of perspectives that address both reciprocity and the need to go beyond purely quantitative models of power.

Consent

In the sociology and political science literatures, one way of resolving many problems with a quantitative capacity view of power has been to conceive of power as a function of the *consent* of subordinates (Hindess, 1996). This view has been relatively ignored in social psychology, but it has a great deal to offer. In short, the consent view argues that powerful individuals rule by legitimate right. Such a right may have been granted, originally, by God or other divinity; by successful exercise of force; by tradition; or by the blessing of some institution, be it the State, the Church, or the corporation. However, to endure, power must not only be endowed to the holder but also ratified by the support (the consent) of those who will be subordinate to it. It is the subjects' consent that provides authority for the power holder to act—that is, consent ensures the capacity to act, and thus constitutes the power itself.

Power as right is strongly associated with Locke (1689/1988), who believed that sovereigns had power as a function of the consent of their subjects. Once consent was withdrawn, then power was nullified. Later theorists such as Hamilton and Biggart (1985) have argued that the power holder and subordinate are bound in a dialectical relationship, in which each is obligated to show obedience: the subordinate to the power holder's commands, and the power holder to the role demands and expectations associated with power. If the power holder should refuse to fulfill those role expectations (e.g., if a boss refused to make decisions, did not exert discipline, or avoided stating his or her opinion), then subordinates would likely withhold consent and refuse to carry out orders. As a consequence, the power structure would implode.

Both the Lockean concept of consent and the Hamilton and Biggart (1985) model posit a largely implicit process of establishing legitimacy based on moral right, duty, or responsibility. However, consent-based views of power may also be framed in terms more akin to social exchange (Clark & Mills, 1979). For example, Hollander (1958) proposed his concept of *idiosyncrasy credits* to account for why individuals are able to gain the freedom to violate group norms as they gain power. Hollander proposed that competence in attaining group goals and conformity to group norms demonstrate the member's utility and fealty; such a member accumulates virtual "credits" that can be "redeemed" for the privilege of contravening the norms. This covaries with the accumulation of power and influence opportunities in the group.

Again, this perspective is relatively unaddressed by social psychologists who study power. Social psychology has often proceeded by exploring the effects of power as if it were absolute, not just relative; that is, we tend

to identify what “powerful people” do, feel, and think, as if there were no constraints or obligations on those people. Some recent work has explored the idea that observers tend to be biased toward seeing power holders as unconstrained and dispositionally motivated (Overbeck et al., 2006). Individuals placed in positions of power may tend to see themselves as highly constrained, whether by others’ expectations or by their own shortcomings (Orizio, 2002). This disconnect between the assumptions in our manipulations of power and the subjective experience of holding power may lead to limited and fragmentary conclusions.

On the other hand, social psychologists do talk extensively about *legitimacy* (French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1965; Haines & Jost, 2000; Jost, 2001; Kelman, 2001; Keltner et al., 2003; Lammers, Galinsky, Gordijn, & Otten, 2008; Overbeck & Park, 2001; Rodríguez-Bailón, Moya-Morales, & Yzerbyt, 2000; Spears, de Lemus, & Sweetman, Chapter 9, this volume). The concept of legitimacy is clearly related to consent. It is distinct insofar as legitimacy reflects the end state of acceptance of a system and its embedded hierarchies as *morally right* (Zelditch, 2001), and consent is the operational step that provides a means to that end. At this point, it appears that no researcher has tried to design a study involving *consent* per se as the basis for power. French and Raven’s (1959) notion of the legitimate base of power is perhaps the closest that social psychology has come to regarding power as a function of consent. Nonetheless, the intersection of legitimacy and power has played an important role in social psychological literatures such as those on destructive obedience (Milgram, 1969), the psychology of imprisonment (Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973) and system justification (Jost & Banaji, 1994).

Legitimacy is also an important part of the Social Identity Theory (SIT) tradition in social psychology. According to SIT, individuals identify with groups that can offer them a positive social identity. Groups vary in status and thereby in social power, and members of groups can adopt various strategies to deal with their own group’s disadvantages—for example, by devaluing the dimension on which they are disadvantaged. The emphasis on group-based social structure is relevant to social power, since groups inevitably develop power and status hierarchies, and since the intergroup context makes group organization, mobilization, and direction necessary (Brewer, 1997; Caporael, 1997; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Wilson, 1997). Thus, it is not surprising that SIT, and its companion Self-Categorization Theory (SCT; Turner, 1985), which stresses that individuals use signals of comparative fit with their groups to determine how strongly to align with the group, have given rise to two innovative theories of social power—theories that emphasize the role of *identity* rather than dependence or consent.

Identity-Based Theories

Turner's Three Process Theory extended his Self-Categorization Theory to the domain of social power, arguing that shared group identity creates power through the rise of social influence; that is, individuals come together to form a group; the process of coordinating and unifying their self-interests creates influence that allows the group to act with agency as an entitative unit. As members of the group, then, individuals gain the ability to act on the world and change their environment and other people: They gain social power; that is, rather than social power providing someone the means to influence others, it is the group's possession of influence that confers social power upon an individual.

Simon and Oakes (2006) extended SIT and SCT even further. Instead of a coercive force characterized by a focus on controlling outputs, they proposed that social power can be seen as a constructive force characterized by the recruitment of human agency to channel inputs of energy and resources toward meeting the power holder's goals. They argued that power relations typically arise from identity, where conflicting identities between two parties lead to conflict and coercion, and shared superordinate identities lead to influence based on consensual understandings. This focus on identity is presumed to underlie the dependence relations to which other theorists assign primacy. Those theories presume that advantaged possession of resources will constitute a power advantage, but Simon and Oakes challenge this view as leaving important questions unanswered: What determines *which* resources will be valued and when, and for whom?

For example, most junior faculty see tenure as a desired resource. Simon and Oakes (2006) might argue that tenure is valued—and thus confers a power advantage on those who can grant or withhold it—but only by those junior faculty whose identities are strongly invested in their careers. For the occasional assistant professor who sees the career as “just a job,” and whose identity is invested in some other pursuit (e.g., his avocation, artistic painting), then the fact that other faculty can control his tenure decision suddenly loses power to affect his thoughts or behavior. In both cases, the senior faculty possess the same balance of resources relative to the junior faculty member, but in only one case does that constitute power; and identity makes the difference.

The SIT tradition, with its emphasis on relations among groups as a driver of hierarchies, has given rise to a final important perspective on power—an explicitly structural theory, Social Dominance Theory (SDT; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). SDT holds that the higher one's individual preference for social dominance, the more one tends to endorse inequalities in privilege and opportunity as a function of group-based differences in social power. SDT argues that group-based hierarchy is universal and inevitable.

Individuals vary in the degree to which they endorse this form of social organization, but in general appear most comfortable when they know their place in the hierarchy. Even members of groups with little social power may be satisfied if they have the certainty and security of a clear (low) hierarchical position. SDT is perhaps the most macro level of all the social psychological approaches to power (Brauer & Bourhis, 2006).

SIT and SDT are prominent and influential within social psychology; as such, it might be argued that psychology already has a record of examining “power that is embedded in and works through the social structure and norms of a community” (Ng, 1980, p. 3). At the same time, this attention has been directed largely to topics such as social structure and intergroup relations, and to processes such as prejudice and stereotyping. These perspectives have not—other than Turner’s Three-Process Theory (2005) and Simon and Oakes’s (2006) Identity Model of Power—focused explicitly on *social power*. The study of power as a function of social structure and norms is most often ceded to sociology and political science, where a number of later theories on power have focused on its implicit, covert nature. For example, power might be seen as the ability to set the agenda and determine what issues will be recognized as candidates for discussion or influence, when there is open conflict among interests (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962). On the other hand, Lukes (1974) argues that power is the ability to control what is perceived as an interest or a good at such a covert level that other parties are not even aware that interests are being contested.

It would not be accurate to argue that psychology has missed these subtle conceptions of power entirely. For example, these perspectives are echoed by Kelman’s (1958) notion of *internalization*—the subordinate’s completely embracing the superior’s wants as his or her own—and French and Raven’s (1959; Raven, 1965) notion of *referent power*—the subordinate’s desire to fulfill the superior’s wants to emulate or to please the superior. Similarly, literature on conformity (Asch, 1951), persuasion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984), influence (Cialdini, 1993), and even role models (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997) has examined areas that are relevant to these implicit perspectives. Nonetheless, the explicit idea that *power* can be exercised without struggle or even the experience of difference offers a ripe area for future research.

Distinguishing Personal and Social Power

In the previous section, I argued that social power must be considered a relational construct, and that appropriate definitions and approaches to social power must not lose sight of its inherently relational nature. However, to return to the first and simplest definition presented, if *power* most broadly refers to “the production of intended effects” (Russell, 1938), then

one might conceive of a “power” that is not relational at all. A longtime tradition in the power literature distinguishes *power over*, or the control or domination of others, from *power to*, the ability to carry out action³ (Ng, 1980; Russell, 1938; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Accordingly, we can distinguish between the interpersonal exercise of power (power over, or *social power*), and one’s own agentic capacity (power to, or *personal power*; Heider, 1958; Overbeck & Park, 2001).

Although most social psychological work on “power”—including this chapter—focuses on effects of social power, it is useful to consider personal power as well. The concept of personal power has its roots psychologically in White’s (1959) conception of *competence*, DeCharms’s (1968) *personal causation*, Heider’s (1958) concept of *can*, Ryan and Deci’s (2000) *autonomy*, and James’s (1890/1981) conception of the self’s *agency*. White (1959) posited competence as the individual’s mastery of inanimate objects and of the self—in short, *power*, but without any relational component. Similarly, Maslow (1943) postulated the need for self-actualization, and Adler (1966) built his view of psychology around the idea that human beings strive for power as an antidote to the powerlessness experienced in early childhood (also see Bugental, Chapter 7, this volume).

Works on locus of control (Rotter, 1966), illusions of control (Taylor & Brown, 1988), control deprivation and motivation (Brehm, 1993; Gifford, Weary, & Gleicher, 1993; Kofta & Sedek, 1998), outcome dependency (Erber & Fiske, 1984), learned helplessness (Petersen, Maier, & Seligman, 1995), and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) all focus on the domain of personal power, but the construct is typically treated as *control* rather than power. As such, there has not been an explicit effort toward developing a unified psychology of personal power.

Though this perspective on power remains largely unexplored in the growing social psychological literature on power, Van Dijke and Poppe (2006) argue that many effects that appear to involve social power may instead reflect individual strivings for personal power. In two studies, they have found evidence that participants were motivated to decrease dependence on others but not particularly motivated to increase their power *over* others. They argue that many findings that appear to suggest a motive for social power may actually reflect desire for personal power. If so, it might be worthwhile to explore ways to help people understand that they may wish to gain personal more than social power. Willer, Lovaglia, and Markovsky (1997) argued that exercising control over others can prompt their resistance. In some Eastern philosophical traditions, it is argued that self-control is a greater source of power than dominating others, because it allows true mastery and achievement. Future research might fruitfully explore such normative and prescriptive differences between personal and social power.

THE PURPOSE AND EXERCISE OF SOCIAL POWER

Having explored what power *is*, it next makes sense to ask what power is *for*: How is it used, and to what end? Such questions also have important implications for how a social psychology of power develops. In particular, this chapter continues to focus on *social* power. Answers tend to fall into two categories: dominance perspectives, which emphasize a more sinister use aimed at coercion and exploitation, and functionalist perspectives, which argue for a constructive use aimed at mutual benefit.⁴

Dominance Perspectives

In the popular imagination, the powerful are viewed with distrust. It is believed that “power corrupts” (Lord Acton, 1865), that power goes to one’s head, that the powerful are willing to hurt others to get what they want. Ng (1980) showed that individuals described as “power seeking” are seen more negatively even than those described as “cold.” Dépret and Fiske (1993) called power “a dirty word in our culture’s lexicon” (p. 176). Pfeffer (1992) argued that people feel deeply ambivalent about even acknowledging that power plays a role in organizational decision making, because to do so contravenes our myths that decisions are determined by individual merit and objectively “correct” alternatives. In short, power is often viewed in sinister terms, as a force of domination and coercion whose aim is to exploit other people, and whose attainment is “desired as an end in itself” (Russell, 1938, p. 216) rather than as a means of accomplishing any substantive, consensually desirable objective (Lenski, 1966). Whole books have been devoted to power as a dire force (e.g., Lee-Chai & Bargh, 2001).

According to Lenski (1966), the dominance view is characterized by a belief that the nature of human beings is essentially negative and corrupt: Without the restraining influence of society, any group would inevitably come to resemble the boys in *The Lord of the Flies* (Golding, 1958). When social groups arise, some individual is likely to seize power for the self, using coercion to ensure his or her ascendancy and to secure resources and privileges. This leads to conflict, with the subordinate members oppressed and disadvantaged by not only the power holder’s initial coercion but also the system he or she establishes (using inheritance, nepotism, or fraud) to ensure that inequality endures.

This dominance view holds that power is negative irrespective of how it is exercised. Russell (1938) distinguished *naked power*, in which physical force prevails, from *traditional power*, based in legitimacy and propaganda. But both forms of power can embody the dominance view: Physical force can be used to dominate and injure; propaganda can be used to manipulate people to support ideas and actions that are contrary to their

own interests. What is required by the dominance view is that the power holder act for self- or group-enrichment, at the expense of others, with power for its own sake as the ultimate goal. From Jesus Christ to Tolkien's Galadriel, power is seen as a temptation that must ultimately corrupt even the best intentions of its holder, if it is sought for its own sake. Skepticism of power was one ingredient in the political revolution created by Enlightenment thinkers, such as Locke and Rousseau, through their emphasis on popular sovereignty.

Indeed, in many cases, power's bad reputation is merited. Historically, we see evidence in the corruption of leaders from Caesar Augustus to Dick Cheney. Anecdotally, most of us have observed the executive or university administrator who puts maintaining power above the good of the organization. Social psychological research has shown power to be associated with failure to recognize others' points of view (Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006), with self-serving behavior (Chen et al., 2001; Ng, 1982), with hostile teasing and aggression (Keltner et al., 2003), with an increased likelihood to sexually harass (Bargh, Raymond, Pryor, & Strack, 1995), and with domestic abuse (Bugental, 1993).

In short, the dominance perspective is easy to accept. However, not all power holders act abusively or coercively; not all are motivated by the desire to control others; and not all seek power as an end in itself. Although social power can be negative, and power holders can be corrupt, a science that explained only those dimensions of experience would necessarily be incomplete. If we are to develop a coherent and robust social psychology of power, it is necessary to look beyond this very particular view. Power can also be seen as a universal, necessary, and even inevitable force. Without power, no collection of people would be able to accomplish any end. This functionalist perspective, periodically quite well developed by students of power, has received less attention from social psychologists, but it deserves a closer look.

Functionalist Perspectives

Russell (1938, p. 216) contrasted the seeker of power as an end with one who uses power as a means only: "The man who desires power as a means has first some other desire, and is then led to wish that he were in a position to achieve it." The functionalist view of social power argues that this, in fact, is the predominant expression of power. Human beings live and congregate in groups. Groups naturally require organization and coordination. Direction is needed to ensure that the group meets its goals and does not waste resources or opportunities; such needs give rise to the emergence of power. The functionalist view holds that groups invest power in one or a few individuals to ensure the success of the entire group.

Among the leading proponents of this view in political science were Arendt (1970), Mann (1986), and Parsons (1967). All three argued that hierarchical inequality arises not from a sinister seizing of privilege by self-serving powermongers, but rather from the needs of social groups and societies to order and govern themselves so they may attain outcomes valued by the entire group. Groups have a vested interest in putting the most capable people in positions where their skills can benefit the group; and to entice them to these positions the group must offer benefits, such as resource advantages.

Until recently, the functionalist perspective has lacked vocal advocates among social psychologists (but see the work of Ridgeway and colleagues for functionalist accounts of social status; Berger, Cohen, & Zelditch, 1972; Berger, Ridgeway, Fisek, & Norman, 1998; Ridgeway, Boyle, Kuipers, & Robinson, 1998). Earlier psychologists, such as Adler, Adorno, and Freud, generally decried power and power strivings as expressions of dominance. Later, Maslow, Horney, White, and DeCharms introduced models of power as essential to optimal human actualization; however, the “power” that they endorsed was generally *personal*, not social, power. A power involving any kind of control over others became something exploitive and unhealthy. In the Western, individual-focused model of psychology, there was no conception of *social* power that could accommodate a collective investment of group agency into one person.

However, it appears that increasing attention is being paid to this perspective. Simon and Oakes (2006) refocused on functional power in their identity model of power:

Power should be seen not only as a conflictual coercive force but also as a consensual productive and organizing force. . . . Power has to do with the power holder’s capacity to “recruit agency” by other free social actors. . . . Power holders exert their power by getting others to have the desires they want them to have and by manipulating social identities. (Brauer & Bourhis, 2006, p. 605).

Though recognizing that power can also, at times, be associated with domination, Simon and Oakes argue that the functional perspective deserves much greater weight than it typically receives from social psychologists.

Along the same lines, Overbeck, Correll, and Park (2005) argued that power is assigned in a reciprocal process open to influence by both the individual seeking power and the group needing a leader. In general, power is available to all of the (few) individuals who seek it. However, some groups may have relatively more power seekers, and competition for power may ensue. In that case, power is invested in the person who pairs individual desire for status with a stronger value for interpersonal cooperation, that is, those who can best satisfy the group’s needs.

It should also be noted that all of the perspectives reviewed to this point focus on culturally Western conceptions of power. Missing are Eastern (primarily Asian) views, which appear to differ in a number of significant ways. As reviewed by Zhong, Magee, Maddux, and Galinsky (2006), East Asian concepts of power comport with the functionalist perspective, in that power is seen to carry responsibility rather than privilege. The Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist traditions, for example, discuss control over self and impulses, a subordination of personal interests to the good of others, an orientation toward one's group, and a duty to hierarchical relationships (cf. Jones, 1981). These beliefs can be manifested in actions, such as some Japanese CEOs' taking such extreme personal responsibility for their companies' failures that they commit suicide (cf. Zemba, Young, & Morris, 2006).

Lukes (1974) argued that the functionalist view is not an especially interesting avenue of inquiry: "[With a] focus on 'power to' . . . , the conflictual aspect of power—the fact that it is exercised *over* people—disappears altogether from view. And along with it there disappears the central interest of studying power relations in the first place—an interest in the (attempted or successful) securing of people's compliance by overcoming or averting their opposition" (p. 31). Though certainly this issue has motivated social psychologists from Adorno (1950) to Milgram (1974) to Zimbardo (Haney et al., 1973), to have a full understanding of the social psychology of power, we need to know about more than the dynamics of coercion. Knowing how functional power structures affect the internal experience of the power holder, relations with subordinates, action and inaction, and thought and emotion all are essential to knowing about social power.

WHAT WE KNOW, WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

Theorists have tried and failed repeatedly to create an all-encompassing definition of What Power Is. Their efforts have yielded disagreement about the nature of power (Does it reflect quantitative capacity? Consent? Identity?) and its purposes (Does it exist to oppress or to serve?) It may be less useful to seek a unified definition of *power* than to focus on systematic mapping of how effects of power covary with the kind of power studied; that is, perhaps we are always consigned to study just one limited aspect of power at a time, but we can do so deliberately and explicitly, using multiple perspectives and approaches in programmatic research. In this way, systematic study can create a more comprehensive body of work that helps us understand power as it has been conceived by social psychology and beyond. This final section of the chapter considers what has been learned so far about the social psychology of social power, and offers some ideas for how alternative perspectives can extend our knowledge.

Findings from Social Psychology

The earliest work that addressed power in social psychology—though not explicitly about power per se—focused on the behavioral effects of power on those subject to it. For example, Milgram's (1969) studies of obedience to authority established that ordinary individuals look to those with power for direction, and expect the powerful to assume responsibility for actions. One might argue that Milgram's studies demonstrated that low-power individuals saw themselves as merely extensions of the will and intent of the powerful: They experienced a lack of free choice and a sense that they were bound to enact behaviorally the motivations of the powerful person.

More recently, social psychological inquiry has focused on the effects of power on those who have it—that is, on how powerful people think, act, choose, and judge, either within themselves or in relation to (generally low-power) others. Two extremely influential bodies of work launched this recent flurry of research: Fiske's (1993) Power As Control (PAC) model of power and social perception has prompted energetic follow-up study of power's effects on stereotyping, individuation, and degree of flexibility in attention (Guinote, 2007a, 2007c; Overbeck & Park, 2001, 2006; Vescio et al., 2003; Weick & Guinote, 2008). A decade later, Keltner et al. (2003) published a theory linking social power with behavioral approach, and lack of power with behavioral inhibition. They argued for approach and inhibition differences in the behaviors, cognitions, and affective experiences of powerful and powerless people. Subsequently, research to examine their predictions burgeoned (e.g., Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Anderson & Galinsky, 2006; Galinsky et al., 2003; Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006).

From the ensuing research, a few consistent patterns have emerged. Power appears to foster a strong orientation to rewards and opportunities (Keltner et al., 2003), which can depress perceptions of potential risks or disadvantages (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006). Powerful people show a predisposition for action rather than inaction or watchful deliberation (Galinsky et al., 2003; Magee, 2009). Power is associated with strong goal orientation—perhaps by definition, given that power is associated with *getting things done*, and this directly connotes goal achievement. As such, powerful people are more sensitive and responsive to goals than are the powerless (Overbeck & Park, 2006), and they allocate scarce attentional resources to goal-relevant, but not to goal-irrelevant, objects (Guinote, 2007b, 2007c; Chapter 5, this volume). This instrumental use of attention appears to extend to the domain of social perception, such that powerful perceivers attend to others when that serves their own goals and interests but are much less likely to attend when it does not (Galinsky et al., 2006; Goodwin et al., 2000; Overbeck & Park, 2001, 2006; Vescio, Gervais,

Heiphetz, & Bloodhart, 2009). Finally, power appears to foster the expression of individual dispositions and preferences, whereas powerlessness may foster accommodation to the situation and to others' expectations (Chen et al., 2001; Overbeck et al., 2006; Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson, & Liljenquist, 2008).

The coherence among these findings—the degree to which they seem to reflect a consistent difference in the psychology of the powerful and powerless—may be related to two sets of *fundamental dimensions* that appear to characterize human psychology more broadly. Voluminous evidence supports the notion of two fundamental dimensions in the domain of attitudes and perception: One is variously labeled *agency*, *competence*, *dominance*, or *self-profitability*, and the other, *communality*, *sociability*, *warmth*, or *other-profitability* (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Judd, James-Hawkins, Yzerbyt, & Kashima, 2005; Peeters, 2001; Wojciszke, 2005). In the domain of behavior, the two fundamental dimensions are *approach*, on the one hand, and *avoidance*, or inhibition, on the other (Keltner et al., 2003; Smith & Bargh, 2008). Power and status seem to map fairly cleanly onto both sets of dimensions, with high power associated with agency and approach, and low power associated with sociability and avoidance. It may well be that “universals” in the psychology of power reflect the ways in which hierarchical relations covary with these fundamental dimensions. Indeed, Vescio and colleagues (2009) have developed a theoretical account for power and stereotyping that emphasizes the intersection between agentic, goal-directed behavior and human belongingness needs, arguing that powerful people's instrumental social attention arises from their need to satisfy *both* dimensions.

Findings from Other Disciplines

As this chapter has focused heavily on the definitions offered by disciplines outside psychology—especially philosophy, political science, and sociology—it is also appropriate to consider those disciplines' findings regarding dynamics and effects of power. These emphasize macro processes, examining how power is distributed in societies and political entities, and are virtually mute on individual-level effects of power.

Power scholars seem to agree that societies tend toward greater inequality (Lenski, 1966; Mann, 1986); that is, as any society arises, there also arise identifiable economic, religious, and political elites. These elites' interests may converge or compete, but as their members interact, an established order forms and constitutes a power structure that enjoys disproportionate privilege and share of resources (Hindess, 1996; Lenski, 1966; Russell, 1938). Though some scholars in the mid-20th century observed that industrialization seemed to offer a counterexample (i.e., it was associ-

ated with decreasing income and status inequality between the highest and lowest strata of societies; cf. Lenski, 1966), recent disparities in industrial and postindustrial societies suggest that this was not a persistent trend.

Once an initial power structure has arisen, that structure must maintain its legitimacy in order to persist. Often, however, elites use oppression and coercion to impose their will, and this unjust exercise of power elicits resistance—sometimes, ultimately, revolution—from the oppressed (Blau, 1964; Freire, 1970; Russell, 1938). Two noteworthy sequelae may result. First, in the case in which the oppressed succeed in gaining power, a cycle of oppression may be launched given that the underclass has not learned a functional model of exercising power and so it will tend to enact its new, powerful role by engaging in oppression of the new underclass.

Second, Russell (1938) argued that political systems tend to follow a predictable pattern of revolution; consolidation of power by the victors marked by overt, physical enforcement; subsequent movement toward legitimacy as a means of avoiding the need for constant physical enforcement and of ensuring stable, consensual order; and finally, as opposing interests gained strength, revolution again.

Much attention has been paid to the ways distributive systems are created and maintained; who gains resources and privileges; and what obligations are exacted from them in return. Those who control means of production (Marx, 1848), land and resources (Lenski, 1966; Mann, 1986), and channels of persuasion (Lukes, 1974) are seen as most likely to enjoy privilege and power. Relatedly, social network theories have posited that power is determined by position within bargaining networks: Being central in a network or occupying the position that connects two separate networks can help an individual or a group to maximize influence.

Functional theorists such as Davis (1949), Mosca (1939), and Parsons (1967) argued that powerful elites' advantage in these systems of distribution oblige them to provide for the needs of the broader society. The repeated pairing of the trappings of position, and the behaviors associated with that position, imbues the elite with an *internalized disposition* suited to holding and exercising power (Bourdieu, 1980), and this fosters the self-perpetuation of social stratification. Those at the bottom of a society may also internalize their role expectations and environmental affordances, though to much more disadvantageous effect. Powerlessness tends to foster responses that the powerful see as maladaptive and that, indeed, tend to work against their ability to further their own interests, such as competition with fellow proletariat and even slovenliness, self-directed harm, and neglect (cf. Allport, 1954; Freire, 1970; Lenski, 1966).

As for system maintenance, several theorists have noted that the more subtle the exercise of power, the more potentially effective it is. For example, Lukes (1974) argued that power operates most strongly—and covertly—

through the manipulation of the masses' view of their own interests, such that they advocate for the interests of the elite without ever even realizing that their own interests are compromised by the result. In another vein, it has often been argued that social approval and censure work more effectively than laws and formal enforcement in effecting behavioral control (Barker, 1993; Blau, 1964).

Omitted so far from this chapter has been the study of dominance orders among primates. This work has yielded many fascinating findings. Space permits me to name just a few that may be of particular interest and relevance to social psychology. For example, it is well known that the highest positions in a chimpanzee band are often claimed by physical challenge—a lower-ranked animal (typically male) attacks and fights the higher-ranked animal, and the winner claims the prize of higher rank. However, dominance contests are not invariably violent; rather, there are often very ritualized displays of aggression without actual aggression, and the challenge may be settled without any physical contact in ways that evoke the posturing and social maneuvering that humans display (cf. DeWaal, 2000).

Sapolsky (2005) has shown that high status among baboons is determined in part by accurate social perceptions; high-status baboons are good at distinguishing real from perceived threats (social and otherwise)—unlike low-status baboons, who fail to differentiate between the two, thus wasting energy and worsening their own stress. High-status baboons also benefit from lower levels of stress hormones overall than those at lower levels of the hierarchy. This is especially the case following conflict situations: High-status baboons enjoy a rewarding rush of testosterone, whereas the vanquished, low-status baboons suffer a flood of cortisol instead.

What We Still Need to Learn

As the preceding material illustrates, social psychology has begun to yield a coherent body of knowledge about how powerful people think, feel, and behave. It has been less engaged than other disciplines that examine power with questions of how and why people seek and gain power, and how power hierarchies emerge and persist. The most common social psychology research designs have tended to examine contexts in which the hierarchy is relatively open and overt, and situations that prompt a powerful mind-set but lack active relations with subordinates. As such, the literature is typically mute on the issue of whether power in a given study is coercive and dominance-based, or functional and constructive. Furthermore, as argued earlier, manipulations of social power have tended to reflect the quantitative-capacity view of power that compares one person with “more power” with another person with “less power.” These particulars have

so far left a great range of questions unaddressed, and the perspectives reviewed in this chapter may offer hints as to other domains of inquiry.

For example, currently, the power literature offers little sense for how power changes over time: Intuition suggests that people who are new to power are uncomfortable with it and strive to remain undifferentiated from their previous peers; they may even hesitate to use their power to its full potential. But those who have long held power may become accustomed to it, may grow to see their use of power as a natural right, and may respond quite differently in terms of their emotions and cognitions, as well as their actions. The traditional quantitative capacity view might emphasize how the person's amount of power changes over time. A consent view might instead emphasize how the power holder gains—and internalizes—increased legitimacy over time, with repeated use of power and repeated compliance by subordinates. This view might foster questions about the degree to which the power holder is maneuvering, motivated by dominance goals, or trying to use power in a functional manner and confronting difficult trade-offs and challenges as his or her tenure in power persists—and the degree to which any of these processes are subject to the power holder's conscious awareness. An identity-based view might examine the degree to which the power holder sees him- or herself as an extension or embodiment of that system, and might consider potential confusion to exist between the power holder's perceptions of his or her own desires and those of the group.

As another example, it is often observed that power is self-perpetuating, and that all groups and societies ultimately create power orders (cf. Russell, 1938). Across disciplines, including social psychology, we have threads of explanation for why and how this occurs. We know that there is a life cycle that marks transitions and consolidation of power (Russell, 1938). If this pattern, borrowed from sociology, were studied in a social psychology paradigm that also paid attention to consent, it might increase the focus on how powerful people respond to those who are subordinate, how they create strategies for attaining and maintaining power, how they are constrained and imperfectly free due to the need to maintain the proper image and profile of power, and even how they may feel vulnerable and insecure as a function of the need to maintain others' consent.

Perhaps more interesting, it might prompt greater attention to the processes and responses of the powerless: Why do they consent? How do they ensure that their own needs are met? Do concepts such as *noblesse oblige* and Raven et al.'s (1998) *legitimate dependence*—the subordinate's claim upon the powerful by virtue of his or her own weakness that demands care—account for their willingness to support a system that perpetuates their own disadvantage? Similarly, an identity-based account might posit that the low-power members of a group or society will tend to support a

hierarchical status quo because of how their own identities are influenced by and embedded within that hierarchical system.

In most work on social power, we tend to focus on the power holder, whether as perceiver or target. Largely ignored in recent years are the perspectives of the powerless—and this chapter has done little to contribute to that issue. Although low-power conditions are included in most research, the goal still seems to be the development of a psychology of *power*; perhaps our future work will lead us closer to a psychology of *power and powerlessness*.

Indeed, as the social psychology of power grows into a mature literature, it is our hope that we can expand our range of inquiry to include topics that have not yet been embraced. This chapter has laid out just a few of the possibilities: Ripe topics for study include personal power, consent-based and structural power; and functional views of power. We can even expand our view beyond *human* power to learn from the fascinating and burgeoning literature on social power and status dynamics among nonhuman primates (cf. Boehm & Flack, Chapter 2, this volume). Power researchers love to quote Bertrand Russell's view that "the fundamental concept in social science is Power, in the same sense in which Energy is the fundamental concept in physics" (1938, p. 4). Today in social psychology, "power is everywhere" (Foucault, 1982); the topic is enjoying a groundswell of activity. For power researchers, it is a thrilling time.

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NOTES

1. For readers interested in a more granular view of these theories, a set of verbatim definitions of *power* from a wide range of theorists and approaches is available from the author.
2. It should be noted here that although a *theory* may involve a quantitative-capacity view of power, its component views of power may not be uniformly quantitative. French and Raven's (1959) *reward* power seems very quantitative, insofar as the power holder's access to rewards is generally quantifiable. As discussed at length below, their *legitimate* power may not be quantifiable so much as it reflects the consent and willing acquiescence of those with lower power. Nonetheless, I classify theirs as a quantitative-capacity *theory* because it lends itself naturally to calculating the overall amount of power that one individual might hold.

3. Typically, the focal distinction is whether the power holder is operating for the benefit of the larger group, to achieve some desirable outcome for which power is a means; or whether the power holder sees power as an end in itself, and acts from the desire to diminish others and secure disproportionate benefits for the self. Such issues of functional versus dominance focus are considered later.
4. Note that the terms *dominance* and *functional* in the context of the exercise of power, have specific meanings. The discipline typically uses *dominance* to refer to an individual difference in the desire for hierarchical advantage or to the affinity for hierarchical ordering of groups in society (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). *Functional* typically refers to ways in which behavior is adaptive or instrumental. In this chapter, I borrow from sociological treatments of power, and the long-standing use of these terms in making an explicit contrast between a coercive, exploitive view of power (dominance) and a view of power as a necessary part of group life, and as a constructive force for the achievement of group goals (functional).

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