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Getting What They Came For

How Power Influences the Dynamics and Outcomes of Interpersonal Interaction

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Many social interactions are indelibly tinged by issues of power and of power differences. Consider some common social interactions: First, imagine a job candidate going in for an interview with a potential employer. Next, consider a teacher meeting new students on the first day of class. Then, imagine two people meeting for a first date. Finally, imagine two college roommates meeting for the first time at the beginning of the semester. Each of these scenarios contains at least two common features, which together set the stage for the arguments that are offered in this chapter. First, each scenario involves a situation in which two people are meeting for the first time—the participants are getting acquainted with one another. Second, in each scenario, there are considerations of power that may influence the dynamics and the outcomes of the interactions that occur between the participants.

Few would argue with the assertion that, in the first two situations, the individuals involved are characterized by different amounts of social power—in classrooms, teachers typically have more power than students and, in an employment interview, the potential employer has a great deal of power over the outcomes of the potential employee. The role-based power differences in the first two examples are fairly obvious, for the roles of teacher and of employer explicitly confer power over students and employees. However, even these two situations may have power dynamics that are more complex than a surface-level analysis would suggest. And, examining the complexity of power differences

will make it clear that power differences may well be present even in the latter two scenarios, the first date and the roommate meeting. These scenarios, although not marked by obvious role related differences in social power, contain features such as differences in knowledge, expertise, or investment that may lead to power differences emerging.

The focus of this chapter is on an exploration of how power influences the dynamics of interpersonal interactions such as the ones in the examples, and how these power influenced dynamics determine the outcomes of interactions. First the nature and the complexities of the power differences present in these sorts of interactions are described, and then an exploration of the relation of power to the dynamics and outcomes of such interactions is presented.

THE COMPLEXITY OF POWER DIFFERENCES

An important preliminary to discussing the nature of these power complexities is to first delineate what is meant by power. For the purposes of this discussion, the widely accepted definition of power proposed by French and Raven (1959; see also Bannester, 1969; Huston, 1983) is used. This way of considering power has received widespread attention, and acceptance, in the research literature (see Podsakoff & Schriesheim, 1985, for a review). According to the French and Raven analysis of the bases of power, a person's social power is defined as the extent to which that person has the potential ability to influence another person in a given setting. This influence may take a number of forms. The most straightforward form of this influence occurs when a high power person influences the actual behaviors of a lower power person, but the potential for influence may also extend to creating changes in a person's thoughts and beliefs, or eliciting changes in the persons affective states (see also Raven, 1992).

Turning back to the initial examples of dyadic interaction, the form of power difference in the first two examples (the teacher and the new student, the employer and the prospective employee) is that *of legitimate power,* which French and Raven define as the ability to influence another because of a socially proscribed role giving legitimacy to ones influence. In our society, teachers are supposed to have influence over their students and employers are allowed to influence their employees. Two other fairly clearly defined forms of social power present in these first two dyads are those *of reward* and *coercive* (or punishment) power. Clearly teachers have the ability to give rewards (e.g., good grades, praise) and punishments to influence the behaviors of their students. Employers also have a variety of rewards and punishments (e.g., job positions, salaries, other benefits) to influence employee behavior. Although these types of power differences may also from time to time be present in the date and roommate situations, they are less likely to be a central feature of those sorts of interactions.

However, the power dynamics in even these first two situations are far more complex than this initial analysis would suggest. Delving deeper into each situation, it seems that three other bases of power posited by French and Raven

(1959, and further elaborated by Raven, 1992,1993) are also present in the first two examples, and have every potential to be present in the latter two as well. Consider first *expert power,* the ability to influence because one is seen as an expert on a particular issue and therefore should be believed and obeyed. Clearly, in classroom settings, the teacher is viewed as the expert on a variety of issues and thus has power to influence the student. Similarly, in an employment interview, an applicant may submit to the influence of the interviewer because that person is seen as the expert on matters relating to ones employment in a particular position. In the first date scenario, one member of the dyad may be more likely to be seen as the expert dater by virtue of age, dating experience, general sociability, and so forth. Similarly, in the roommate situation, one person may be seen as an expert on a particular subject, such as information about social life, or may be generally viewed as the person to go to with questions, thus conferring expert power.

Reference power, or power conferred because one feels (or wants to feel) a sense of identity or oneness with the person, also plays a role in each of these situations. Teachers are powerful socialization agents, and the desire to be like the teacher may lead to the teacher having reference power over the student. In an employment setting, the interviewee is presumably there, in part, because she or he wants to become a part of the employer's in group—to join the company. Thus, in each of these situations, reference power maybe present. In addition, in the dating and roommate scenarios, one person may have a stronger desire (perhaps because the other person is very attractive, very popular, or has other desirable qualities) to be friends or to develop a relationship. This desire gives the other person more reference power (e.g., Peplau, 1979; Waller & Hill, 1951).

Finally, consider *informational power,* the ability to influence based on the higher power person having information that the lower power person does not possess. Clearly, teachers and employers have, respectively, more academic and more workplace information than do students and potential employees. In the context of a first date, the person who initiated the date often has more information, since she or he presumably knows more about the planned activities to take place. If the date is to be to a play, concert, or movie, the member of the dyad who knows what movies are playing and what plays are showing may have more informational power. With roommates, one may have information that the other needs in order to interact smoothly with other residents or to participate in dorm activities.

A second important type of knowledge that may lead to informational power differences is information about the other person in the dyad. Typically, teachers have a variety of kinds of information about their students before they meet on the first day of class. They have the students permanent record, have probably discussed the students progress with other teachers, and may have heard about the student from other sources. Likewise, an employer often has a great deal of information about the employee—a resume, references from former employers, and perhaps results from a battery of selection tests.

In the dating situation, one member of a dating dyad may well have more knowledge about the other, particularly if the two were set up by a mutual acquaintance. One roommate may have knowledge about the other as a result of campus gossip, information from other students, or other informal sources. These informational differences create a power differential such that the teacher, the employer, the date, and the roommate each have more power than the other member of the dyad.

OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter, we will consider the effects that differences in power have on dyadic interactions including, but not limited to, those discussed above. We will focus our discussion on understanding how power differences influence the behaviors that ensue during interactions between individuals marked by high and low power, as well as the influence of power on the outcomes of these interactions. First the sorts of influences power has on the dynamics of interactions is examined. Next, how and why power influences these interactions is discussed. Finally, some observations and speculations concerning the implications of this analysis for several phenomena in social and personality psychology are offered.

WHAT EFFECTS DOES POWER HAVE IN INTERPERSONAL INTERACTION?

Given the richness (and possibly even the pervasiveness) of power differences inherent in many interpersonal interactions, it is critical to understand the dynamic influence of power on the processes involved in, and the outcomes of, interactions. It is possible to consider the role of power dynamics at many points in the interpersonal interaction sequence. First, power may influence the initial choice of partners with whom to interact (Kerckhoff, 1974; Parks & Eggert, 1991). In a business setting, for example, a higher power person may simply choose not to interact with a subordinate because the subordinate has no control over the higher power person's outcomes. Conversely, the low power person may elect not to interact with the higher power person for fear of doing something to negatively impact the higher power persons control over outcomes.

Next, power can determine the first impressions formed about an interaction partner—power differences can influence the likelihood of using individuating information about a person versus relying on expectations and stereotypes (Fiske, 1993; Neuberg & Fiske, 1987). For example, the high power supervisor in a work setting may rely on information about the employee garnered from others or on ideas about what "that sort of employee" is like when forming an impression.

Finally, power can have implications for choosing to continue or discontinue an interaction. High power people may well have far more freedom to exit from interactions they do not enjoy or do not find productive, since their outcomes are not dependent on the lower power person (Gelles, 1976; Huston, 1983; Strube, 1988). A high power business person can choose to stop interacting with the lower power person without fear of losing his or her job, position, or salary, a freedom not accorded to the lower power person.

In this chapter, we will address the role of power in interaction by focusing in on one critically important stage of this interaction sequence, namely the initial interaction in which people get acquainted with one another. Two main issues are addressed: First, the effects of power on the dynamics of these initial interactions, and second, the question of how and why power influences interactions. The motivations that individuals with differing levels of social power might bring to such interactions and how those motivations might lead them to conduct themselves in ways that lead to particular interaction dynamics are discussed.

Why might these initial acquaintanceship settings be a particularly appropriate venue within which to study power dynamics? Obviously, interactions and relationships must have beginnings, and these beginnings importantly set the stage for any further interactions and relationship development to come (see Murstein, 1976). Thus, the importance of these initial interactions cannot be understated. The impressions formed in these initial interactions color the remainder of the relationship between the individuals, whether that relationship lasts for ten minutes or ten years (e.g., Asch, 1940; Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953). Second, these initial interactions are situations in which the effects of power can be easily and productively observed and manipulated; since the interactions are not yet tinged by a history of relationship, it may well be easier to observe the dynamics and effects of power in these early interaction settings. Finally, a large body of work on interpersonal interaction has concerned this initial person perception and initial acquaintanceship process, making it a useful venue to relate analyses of power to other relevant research findings (e.g., Hays, 1985; Kerckhoff, 1974; Murstein, 1976; Snyder, Tanke, & Berscheid, 1977).

A STRATEGY FOR EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF POWER

An initial question is this: How do power differences in a dyad influence the process of initial acquaintanceship and interpersonal interaction? To explore this question, consider a setting that has features common to interpersonal acquaintanceship and which also contains power differences. What features of acquaintanceship might be important here? Obviously, we need a setting in which two previously unacquainted individuals are meeting and interacting for the first time. But consider also that, when individuals interact for the first time, they frequently come to that initial meeting with a set of preexisting expectations about the other person. These expectations can develop from many sources. For example, stereotypes about a group to which the person belongs can be a

source of beliefs about what the person will be like. Also, one may have received information about the person from a common acquaintance. In the examples above, factual information, such as resumes or school records, can provide a source for a mental picture of what the person will be like.

In addition to being a common feature of interpersonal acquaintanceship, these expectations have the potential to be a source of power differences in their own right. Recall the earlier discussion about informational power differences as a result of one person knowing more about the other. To the extent that expectations are unequally distributed across members of the dyad (as they will surely be when one party to the interaction approaches it with prior expectations and the other does not), the person with more expectations has more information (even if that information is not accurate) and thus has some informational power over the other member of the dyad.

Our strategy for addressing the influences of power on acquaintanceship is to delve into the dynamics of a well-studied process of interpersonal interaction, that *of behavioral confirmation* (Snyder, 1984, 1992). Behavioral confirmation scenarios have both of the features defined as important for this chapters exploration of power. First, the scenario is set up for two previously unacquainted individuals to interact. Second, the very nature of the behavioral confirmation scenario is such that one person has been provided with an expectation about the other person which, as discussed above, leads to the person with the expectation having informational power.

What is Behavioral Confirmation?

As we have pointed out above, a common feature of acquaintanceship interactions is that the individuals frequently have expectations about each other. These expectations play an important guiding role in how we perceive the other person—both our perceptions of who they are (e.g., their personalities) and our perceptions of what they do (e.g., their behaviors). In this sense, what we see when we interact with the person is a function of what we expect to see—a phenomenon referred to as *perceptual confirmation* (Snyder, 1984).

Perceptual confirmation is an interesting phenomenon in its own right, for the purposes here, an even more intriguing effect of these preconceived expectations is the influence that they can have on behavior towards the target of those expectations, and ultimately on the actual behaviors of that target person. People may choose behaviors based on their expectations of what the other person will be like (e.g., we will be very talkative with the person we believe to be extraverted). Behavior based on those expectations, however, can have important consequences—the actions of the holder of the expectations can lead the target of those expectations to actually behave in ways that confirm those original beliefs. This process has been referred to by a number of names in the research literature (e.g., expectancy effects (Rosenthal, 1994) and self-fulfilling prophesies (Merton, 1948; Jussim, 1986). For our discussion, we will choose

the term behavioral confirmation (Snyder, 1984), for it specifically refers to the defining aspects of the phenomenon—the person's behavior is such that it confirms our expectations about them.

A Prototypic Demonstration of Behavioral Confirmation

In an early demonstration of the behavioral confirmation effect, Snyder, Tanke, and Berscheid (1977) had previously unacquainted male-female dyads interact over an intercom system (so that they could talk to, but not see, one another). Prior to the conversation, the researchers manipulated the male member of the dyads expectations about the female member. To do this, they gave each male participant (who we will refer to as the perceiver) a picture ostensibly of his female partner (who we will refer to as the target). In reality, the picture was not of the target, but rather was a picture that was randomly assigned to be of either a physically attractive or a physically unattractive woman.

Based on this manipulation, the male perceivers entered into the acquaintanceship conversation with an expectation about their partner—an expectation based on, depending on condition, stereotypes of attractive or unattractive women. These stereotypes include the idea that attractive women are more sociable, more outgoing, and more interpersonally warm than are unattractive women. The perceiver-target dyads then engaged in a 10 minute, unstructured conversation. Following the conversation, the male perceiver rated his impressions of the female target. The target's side of the conversation was then coded by independent raters for the amount of outgoingness, warmth, and sociability she displayed.

The results of the study showed that targets whose partners believed them to be physically attractive behaved during the interaction in ways that led them to be seen by independent raters as more sociable, warm, and outgoing than did targets whose perceivers believed them to be unattractive. The initial beliefs that the male perceivers held about their female targets turned into self-fulfilling prophesies in the course of their interactions—the targets behaved in ways that actually confirmed their perceivers beliefs.

Why is the Behavioral Confirmation Paradigm a Useful Way to Address Issues of Power?

Let us consider now the ways in which behavioral confirmation paradigms may address issues of power. The informational power differences that are a defining feature of the confirmation scenario were presented earlier. However, in addition to this informational power difference, examining the procedural paradigms used in behavioral confirmation studies through the lens of power suggests that there may be other aspects of power built into these paradigms. Informational power is discussed formally below, then some of these additional power differences are addressed.

Informational Power: Asymmetry of Knowledge. As discussed previously, the experimental paradigm for studying behavioral confirmation by its very nature creates situations in which the perceiver, by virtue of having an expectation, possesses greater informational power than does the target. The nature of the experimental manipulation is that the perceiver is given a piece of information—an expectation—about the target. Of course this informational manipulation is critical to the examination of confirmation as experimenters must give the perceiver an expectation in order to examine whether that expectation has been perceptually and behaviorally confirmed. An unintended side effect of this presentation of information, however, is that the perceiver has information and the target does not, which puts the perceiver in a position of having informational power (French & Raven, 1959) in that they are given a sense of what to expect of the target and, more generally, what to expect to occur in the situation.

Of course, having this knowledge also puts the perceiver in the position of having additional opportunities to act on the expectations given. This functionally puts the target in the position of responding to the perceiver's conversational guidance, providing information about themselves. This power to initiate and control the flow of information may be another important determinant of the confirmation effects observed. In many confirmation scenarios, this power creates a flow of influence from perceiver to target because the perceiver is eliciting information from the target (Mobilio & Snyder, 1996). This flow of information and control is, by itself, related to power differences (Mullen, Salas, & Driskell, 1989; Ng, Bell, & Brooke, 1993).

The same sort of analysis can highlight the inherently low power position of the target. The target operates from an initial position of information deficit. The experimental manipulation creates a situation in which the target doesn't know about the perceiver what the perceiver knows about the target. This deficit of information puts the target in the functional position of needing to act off of cues provided by the perceiver—giving them relatively little power to control, guide, and shape the conversation.

Legitimate Power: Role Differences. In addition to the informational power that is inherent in the behavioral confirmation interactional paradigm, additional power differences may exist. Although not originally intended to test the role of different types of power in interpersonal interactions, many classic demonstrations of behavioral confirmation effects have in effect included legitimate power as an implicit feature by nature of their experimental paradigm. Several studies have, either naturalistically or experimentally, used role relationships in which the perceiver has more power than the target. For example. Word, Zanna, and Cooper (1974) studied interactions between job interviewer perceivers and job applicant targets, Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) examined teachers' perceptions of their students, and both Harris and Rosenthal (1986) and Snyder and Copeland (1995) studied interactions between perceiving counselors and client targets.

Summary: Power and Confirmation

Power differences, as we have seen, are imbedded into the functional roles of perceivers and targets in behavioral confirmation scenarios. The power statuses in the dyad covary with the roles they are assigned in the interaction. This state of affairs could be mere coincidence, but one might also hypothesize that perhaps perceptual, and particularly behavioral, confirmation are phenomena of power due, perhaps, to the high power position inherent in the perceiver role and the low power position that characterizes the target.

PUTTING TOGETHER THE PIECES: DO POWER DIFFERENCES ACCOUNT FOR BEHAVIORAL CONFIRMATION EFFECTS?

To begin to put the pieces of power and behavioral confirmation together one must look at the causal role of power in leading to behavioral confirmation effects. The literature on behavioral confirmation that has been reviewed thus far in this chapter tentatively suggests the possibility that behavioral confirmation may be one important effect of power differentials in dyadic interaction. That is, situations characterized by a relatively powerful perceiver (by virtue of either a given position or by virtue of informational power differences) and a relatively powerless target are situations in which confirmation effects are observed. In these situations, expectations held by the perceiver about the target lead to the target behaving in ways that confirm those expectations.

In addition, the nature of the expectations held by perceivers may enhance the role of power in leading to confirmation. Behavioral confirmation may be facilitated by expectations that are dispositional in nature, as such expectations may provide relatively simple and clear cut guidelines for interacting with the target in ways that may elicit confirmatory actions from them. Moreover, forming expectations that are relatively simple, clear cut, and dispositional in nature may be facilitated by paying relatively little attention to individuating information about the target and the influence of the context of the situation on the targets behavior in that situation. In fact, research has shown that high power people are less likely to pay attention to their interaction partners (e.g., Fiske, 1993), which may make them particularly likely to form simple, clear cut dispositional expectations of targets, which in turn may set the stage for confirmation to be particularly likely to occur.

Of course, to confidently conclude that the effects observed are in fact a result of the inherent power differentials between perceivers and targets, and that behavioral confirmation is in reality a phenomenon of power, the evidence of a study that directly tests this possibility by manipulating power differentials orthogonal to expectations is needed. Such a study was done by Copeland (1994). Copeland gave perceivers an expectation about the extraversion of their interaction partner—the partner was reported to be either rather introverted or rather

extraverted. Orthogonal to that manipulation, Copeland manipulated the relative power of the participants such that either the perceiver or the target was the more powerful member of the dyad. This manipulation was done by giving the powerful member control over participation in a subsequent task in which rewards could be earned.

If behavioral confirmation results from the power inequities in the dyad, these effects should be exacerbated when the perceiver is the high power person (since the experimentally manipulated power adds on to their existing informational power in the interaction) and should be attenuated when the target is the high power person (since relative power is more equalized). By contrast, if the effects observed are due to something other than the power differential, experimentally manipulating power should not influence the extent of the behavioral confirmation effect.

Copeland's (1994) results support our assertion that power differentials in the dyad account for behavioral confirmation effects. When the target was the higher power member of the dyad, no behavioral confirmation was observed—targets were rated as equally extraverted for both expectations. By contrast, when the perceiver was the high power person, behavioral confirmation did occur. Targets whose high power perceivers thought them to be extraverted behaved significantly more extravertedly than did targets who were thought to be introverted.

Copeland's (1994) results confirm what the above discussion has suggested—the power differential between perceiver and target that is created by structural features of the behavioral confirmation scenario leads to behavioral confirmation effects. In situations where that power differential is equalized (by giving the target power over the perceiver) the confirmation effect disappears. When the power differential is made greater by giving the perceiver even more power over the target, confirmation continues to occur.

WHY DOES CONFIRMATION OCCUR? THE ROLE OF MOTIVATIONS

Having established that behavioral confirmation results from situations in which, in addition to having an expectation about the target, the perceiver is in a position of high power relative to the target, we can now turn to addressing the question of how and why power exerts these effects on the interaction process. What is it about interpersonal interactions marked by power differentials that makes them venues in which behavioral confirmation can occur?

This section focuses on looking for these explanations in the motivations that people bring with them to these initial interactions. Why might motivation be a good place to search for the causes of powers influence on behavioral confirmation? First, motivations have long been held to be a determinant of the "perceptual concomitants" of social interaction (Jones & Thibaut, 1958, p. 159). The motivations that people bring with them to social interactions determine

how they perceive those interactions and how they behave during them. Second, there is a well worked out set of motivations that people bring with them to social interactions—motivations that may relate to confirmation (see Snyder, 1992). Finally there is existing literature on the role of motivations themselves on the behavioral confirmation phenomenon, literature which will provide us a base of knowledge from which to make inferences about powers potential role.

To make the argument that differences in interaction motivations are responsible for the effects of power on behavioral confirmation, one must, conceptually, argue for a mediational model showing, first, that the motivations of high and low power people differ in meaningful ways, and then showing that those different motivations are systematically related to behavioral confirmation. Thus motivations high and low power people might bring with them to interpersonal interactions are discussed first. Then, after discussing the nature of these motivations, how motivations held on the part of perceivers and targets might influence the process of behavioral confirmation are explored.

WHAT MOTIVATIONS DO PEOPLE HIGH AND LOW IN POWER BRING TO SOCIAL INTERACTIONS?

If motivations are to be implicated in the search for the causes of power difference effects in acquaintanceship interactions, we first need to show that people high and low in power are guided by different motivations in the course of these interactions. Copeland's (1994) study, described in detail earlier, provides evidence that interaction motivations differ for people with different levels of power. In the study, high power and low power perceivers and targets were asked to report the strategies they used when interacting with their partners. Copeland's (1994) analysis of those strategies revealed an important difference:

high power individuals, whether perceiver or target, were particularly likely to report being guided by a desire to get to know the other person, whereas low power individuals, again regardless of role, were particularly likely to be guided by a motivation to get along with the other person. Other researchers have uncovered similar motivational differences underlying power differences in information processing in person perception (e.g., Fiske, 1993; Fiske & Depret, 1996; Neuberg & Fiske, 1987).

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THESE INTERACTION MOTIVATIONS?

Copeland's (1994) analysis suggests that an additional feature of power in acquaintanceship interactions is that it leads individuals to have different motivations guiding them during the course of the interaction. Prior to discussing reasons why these motivational differences might exist, "getting to know" and "getting along" motivations must be delineated. What are people with each of

these motivations trying to get from or accomplish through their initial interactions with others?

These two motivations have been identified as guiding many acquaintanceship processes, not just those concerned with power (see Snyder, 1992, for a more extensive review of this literature). First, people may have as a guiding motivation getting to know one another—developing a stable impression of the other persons traits, behaviors, feelings, and values. As another motivation, people may be particularly interested in *getting along* with one another—facilitating pleasant, smooth interactions. In more precise language, the getting to know motivation involves the "acquisition and use of social knowledge," whereas the getting along motive involves the "regulation and facilitation of social interaction" (Snyder & Haugen, 1994, p. 220).

Getting To Know as an Interaction Motivation

One of the well documented functions of acquaintanceship conversations is one of getting to know ones interaction partner. Getting to know a person with whom one is interacting has obvious benefits—it gives a stable impression of the other persons thoughts, emotions, behaviors, values, preferences, and so forth—a stable impression that can then be used as information to guide both further perception and action. Several theorists have posited that having such information about the interaction partner helps individuals maintain a sense of their worlds as ordered, stable, predictable places (e.g., Heider, 1958; Jones & Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1967).

In addition to acting to gain knowledge, people may use initial acquaintanceship conversations as an opportunity to "check out" expectations they have or preliminary information they have received about the person with whom they will be interacting. This process has clear implications for behavioral confirmation scenarios, which are by definition critically dependent on preconceived expectations. Having ones preconceived notions validated (e.g., believing that someone is an extravert and then, though behavioral confirmation, having them actually behave in an extraverted manner) increases ones belief in the stability and predictability of the social world.

This inclusion of checking out expectations in the getting to know motivation highlights an important point about the nature of the motive—the guiding force behind the motivation is not necessarily formation of an accurate impression, nor is the mental picture formed through this process guaranteed to be an accurate one. Rather, the guiding idea is that the goal is to form a stable image of the person that can then be readily used to guide further cognition and behavior. To the extent that this image is largely based on preexisting expectations, it may in fact be largely inaccurate. For further elaboration of this distinction between accuracy motivations and getting to know motivations, as well as their differing implications and consequences for behavioral confirmation scenarios, see Snyder (1992) and Snyder and Haugen (1994, 1995).

In terms of the behavioral confirmation scenario, perceivers who behave as though the expectations about others are true may be doing so in the service of confirming those expectations, which satisfies the getting to know goal of having a stable prediction of one's partners behavior. This sense of stability is, if anything, further reinforced when, down the line, ones partner actually starts to behave in ways that confirm the expectations.

Getting Along as an Interaction Motivation

A second important motivation guiding people's social interactions involves getting along with the interaction partner—being motivated to ensure a smooth interaction by trying to fit in, be responsive, and be generally accommodating to ones partner. Behaviors such as saying the right thing, trying to make the other person feel comfortable, allowing the other person to be themselves, and so forth all flow from this motivation to get along with the partner. This motivation helps to ensure smooth, pleasant, flowing interactions (Goffman, 1959; Jones, 1990; Schlenker, 1980; Snyder, 1987).

How might this motivation relate to behavioral confirmation? One might treat an interaction partner in ways dictated by expectations because, if one truly believes that is what the partner is like, then treating them in that way allows him or her to "be themselves." Allowing the other person to be him- or herself is arguably an excellent strategy for ensuring a smooth, coordinated interaction. So, from the perspective of this motivation, facilitating smooth interactions and being responsive to the partners needs and dispositions may be at the heart of the expectation confirming behaviors of behavioral confirmation.

WHY DO THESE MOTIVATIONS CHARACTERIZE HIGH AND LOW POWER PEOPLE?

Why might power positions relate to particular patterns of interaction motives? Consider first the position of the low power person. The low power person enters the interaction being dependent on the higher power person for outcomes—whether those outcomes be rewards, punishments, information, and so forth. This fundamental dependence, which is at the heart of power differences, makes getting along with the partner particularly important for the low power person. This leads to the getting along motivation being a central feature of the low power person's actions.

In addition, the low power person is also strongly influenced by impression management concerns (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Leaving a good impression with the higher power person can help to ensure that the low power individuals get the desirable outcomes they desire. Going along and getting along with the high power person is one strategy for leaving that desirable impression. In fact, the low power person may not be able to "afford" conflict with the

high power person, both because of the outcome dependency and because of the negative impression that such conflict may create (see Sexton & Perlman, 1989).

What of the motivations guiding the high power person? The high power person is in a position of being able to exert influence over the low power person. This desire to exert influence may manifest itself in control over the dynamics of the conversation. Motivation to control the conversation may involve taking active control of the conversation and of the topics covered (Kollock, Blumstein, & Schwartz, 1985; Zimmerman & West, 1975), allowing the perceiver to push the agenda of forming an impression of the target.

One critical need for an ability to exert such influence is to be able to predict the actions and reactions of the lower power person (Copeland, 1994). So, the formation of a stable, predictable impression that is at the heart of the getting to know motivation may be particularly important to the high power person. In addition, the high power person has no need to accurately know the low power person (Glazer-Malbin, 1975; Miller, 1976), making reliance on expectations more likely.

HOW DO THESE MOTIVATIONS RELATE TO BEHAVIORAL CONFIRMATION?

Having established that these two motivations, getting to know and getting along, relate to the relative power held by individuals in an interaction, the important question of whether these motivations influence the process of behavioral confirmation is addressed, thus adding the last link in this mediational chain. Does interacting in the service of one or the other of these agendas make a perceiver more or less likely to elicit behavioral confirmation? **Is** a target acting under one or the other of these agendas more likely to fall victim to behavioral confirmation?

Snyder and Haugen (1994, 1995) conducted a series of studies to address these questions. In both studies, Snyder and Haugen set up a behavioral confirmation scenario in which the motivations of the perceivers (Snyder & Haugen, 1994) or of the targets (Snyder & Haugen, 1995) were experimentally manipulated to be either getting to know or getting along motivations. In the getting to know condition, individuals were told to use the conversation as an opportunity to "check out your first impressions of your partner. Find out what [the partner] is like, what [the partners] personality traits are, and find out what someone with [the partners] personality can be expected to say and do." Individuals in the getting along condition were told to use strategies that "will allow you to get along with the type of person that [the partner] might be, making sure that the two of you have a smooth and pleasant conversation ..." (Snyder & Haugen, 1994, p.228).

What did Snyder and Haugen (1994,1995) discover about motivations and behavioral confirmation? They found that, when the perceiver had a motivation

to get to know the target, to form a stable impression of the targets traits and behaviors, both perceptual and behavioral confirmation occurred. Perceivers with getting along functions and control perceivers did not report perceptual confirmation and did not elicit behavioral confirmation. Similar results were found when Copeland and Snyder (1995) gave students playing the role of counselors instructions to diagnose their clients versus instructions to establish rapport with their clients. Also consistent with this finding, perceivers who are concerned with getting their interaction partners to like them do not report perceptual confirmation (Neuberg et al, 1993).

For perceivers, a getting to know motivation seems to elicit behavioral confirmation whereas getting along does not. What about the motivations that targets bring to an interaction? Here, the getting to know condition did not elicit perceptual and behavioral confirmation. Instead, for target motivations, being motivated to get along led to behavioral confirmation (see also Smith et al., 1997).

What are we to conclude from these two studies? When describing the motivational conditions that elicit behavioral confirmation, situations in which the perceiver is guided by a getting to know motive and the target is guided by a getting along motive seem to elicit confirmation. By contrast, confirmation is attenuated and even eliminated in situations in which the target has a get to know motive and the perceiver has a getting along motive.

PUTTING TOGETHER THE PIECES: POWER, MOTIVATION, AND CONFIRMATION

Again, let us pause to tie together the various threads that have characterized our discussion of power, motivation, and behavioral confirmation. First, we have seen that high and low power people typically enter interactions with different motivations—high power people are guided by a desire to get to know the other person whereas low power people are guided by a motivation to get along with the person. These motivations may be a result of the differences in outcome dependency that characterize high and low power people.

Next, we have seen that these motivations relate differentially to behavioral confirmation. When the perceiver is guided by a getting to know motivation and the target is guided by a getting along motivation, confirmation is particularly likely to occur. Conversely, when the target is guided by getting to know and the perceiver by getting along, confirmation does not occur.

We now begin to see the full range of possible linkages between confirmation and power. Power differences may set up situations in which the high power person is particularly likely to be the perceiver, both because of role related power differences and differences in power due to information. High power perceivers are particularly likely to induce confirmation. In addition, high power people are particularly likely to be guided by getting to know motivations—a motivation that, in its own right, also leads to confirmation. Thus, the dynamics

of interactions marked by power differences may work synergistically to lead to confirmation—position, power, and motivation are all guiding the interaction in ways that lead to expectations being confirmed.

The direct and definitive test of these relationships, of course, would be an exploration of the extent to which the relationship between power and confirmation is actually mediated by motivational differences. To our knowledge, however, no study has fully explored this relationship. Such a study would be a useful step in furthering research on behavioral confirmation and power. Either orthogonally manipulating power, expectation, and motivation in the same design, in order to explore their interacting effects, or doing a mediational analysis of the role of motivation in linking power and confirmation would provide a critical piece of knowledge about the role that motivation plays in determining powers influence on behavioral confirmation.

BROADENING THE PERSPECTIVE: IMPLICATIONS FOR PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

This chapter has so far established that power differences fundamentally shape the dynamics of interpersonal interactions by the influence they have on the form and consequences of initial acquaintanceship conversations and has further explored some of the reasons for these differences by examining the differences in motivations that high and low power individuals bring with them to interactions. These analyses are now built upon to offer some observations and speculations about the implications that the analysis may have for a fuller understanding of the nature and consequences of interpersonal interaction and power. We seek to broaden the scope of the analysis first by extending the understanding of power differences and interpersonal interaction from situationally based power differences to dispositional differences in power and then by exploring the implications and consequences of the interpersonal dynamic of interaction to the group level, looking at the consequences of interpersonal power for stereotyping and intergroup processes.

FROM SITUATIONAL TO DISPOSITIONAL SOURCES OF POWER DIFFERENTIALS

The discussion so far has centered on situations in which there are clear cut (and often assigned) power differentials: the experimenter assigns one person to be the perceiver and one person to be the target, by function of social roles the teacher and the job supervisor have more power than the student and the employee, the person with the ability to give a reward has a fairly unambiguous power over the person who does not have such a reward. Each of these power differences, though, are really more based on features of situations than on features of persons.

Many actual interactions do not feature such clear cut situation-based power differences. Neither are most interactions so neatly planned that only one person has an expectation about the other. What will happen in such situations? Will confirmation simply not occur, even if one person has an expectation about the other? Or will one person naturally step into the role of the high power perceiver whereas another person may more naturally play the part of the lower power target?

Research on dispositional differences in the propensity to power suggests the possibility that the latter possibility may actually occur. Research on the need for power (e.g., Veroff & Veroff, 1972; Winter, 1973) as well as work on Machiavellianism (e.g., Christie & Gets, 1970) suggest that some people are more likely to seek power positions than are others. Along with that, some of the work on the consequences of those dispositions for both cognition and behavior suggests that those people more likely to seek positions of power may also be more likely to adapt getting to know motivations and to behave in ways that elicit confirmation, thus functionally making them perceivers.

In terms of Machiavellianism, those high in the disposition are more likely to become leaders in group settings (Geis, 1968) and are more likely to be seen as leaders by others (Geis, Krupat, & Berger, 1970). It has also been hypothesized that high Machiavellians have a focus on getting the task done and work on stable, predictable views of their partners that will aid them in these goals (Geis, 1968). These stable, predictable views map nicely onto the getting to know motives seen earlier, with the implication that this feature of high Machiavellians may make them particularly likely to be perceivers and, because of the relation to the getting to know motive, may make them likely to be perceivers who elicit behavioral confirmation from their targets.

Research on the need for power also suggests that some individuals may naturally step into high power roles. Bennett (1988) has reported that individuals high in the need for power enjoy gaining positions and recognition for power and are particularly likely to assert their will in various situations. People high in need for power prefer situations in which they have the ability to control others (Winter, 1973; Winter & Stewart, 1978), which may similarly make them likely to be behavioral confirmation eliciting perceivers.

These dispositional differences may lead to circumstances conducive to behavioral confirmation emerging even when these differences are not an inherent feature of the social structure. This analysis suggests that confirmation may be a more ubiquitous effect than at first is evident; it may come to bear on situations that are not inherently marked by either power differences or particular patterns of motivations.

FROM INTERPERSONAL TO INTERGROUP SOURCES OF POWER DIFFERENTIALS

One of the most insidious effects suggested by the work on power and behavioral confirmation concerns its implications for the strength and negative ef-

fects of stereotypes. The groups about whom individuals hold negative stereotypes are often those who are in positions of lesser power in our society. Indeed, differences between groups about whom stereotypes are held have been shown to be perceived as status differences (Kemmelmeier, 2000).

Lower power positions are ones in which expectations about a person are particularly likely to be behaviorally confirmed. As seen above, people low in power may be particularly likely to fall prey to confirmation, since in addition to their inherent low power, they are also frequently outcome-dependent on the very people holding the stereotype. This outcome dependency may lead them to be particularly likely to adopt a getting along agenda, an agenda that has been shown to lead to behavioral confirmation (Snyder & Haugen, 1995). Indeed, in research suggestive of this idea, it has been shown that large confirmation effects are often found in dyads with a male perceiver and a female target (Christiansen & Rosenthal, 1982). In further support for this point about stereotyping, work on the "powerful" self-fulfilling prophesy has found that the effects of teacher expectations on student performance are higher when the students are female, African-American, and of low socioeconomic status (Jussim, Eccles, & Madon, 1996; Madon, Jussim, & Eccles, 1997). These positions, of course, are ones that, in our society, are related to social power, thus providing field study evidence for this point and confirmation of the laboratory evidence about power and confirmation (Copeland, 1994).

Interpersonal Confirmation May Become Group Stereotype Confirmation

The above discussion about the nature of stereotypes in behavioral confirmation scenarios suggests that our analysis may have implications for intergroup processes as well. Stereotypes, although used as expectations about individuals, are actually beliefs about a group of people. What happens, then, when an expectation that is based on a stereotype about a social group of which the target is a member is perceptually and behaviorally confirmed? One potential implication is this: To the extent that the target is seen as a member of the group (i.e., perceived at a category rather than an individuating level; Brewer, 1988; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990), the behavioral confirmation that occurs may not only serve to confirm expectations about the individual, but may in fact serve to reinforce the existing social stereotypes about a *group* of people.

Research on the outgroup homogeneity effect has suggested that members of outgroups are seen as "all alike" (e.g., Jones, Wood, & Quattrone, 1981; Linville, Fischer, & Salovey, 1989; Mullen & Hu, 1989; Ostrom & Sedikides, 1992). The implications of this finding for behavioral confirmation are that, to the extent that an individual is seen as just like other members of that individuals group, stereotypes about the group may serve as expectations for interaction with the individual—expectations that can then be behaviorally confirmed.

The reverse implications, of behavioral confirmation for outgroup perception, are equally impactful. To the extent that all members of a group are seen as alike, the confirmed expectations of the individual who is a member of that group may serve, because of outgroup homogeneity, as a confirmation of the stereotype about that entire group. Thus, having met and interacted with one member of an outgroup, and seen that outgroup member confirm ones expectations, one may confidently generalize—in "to know one of them is to know all of them" fashion—from that experience to the conclusion that all members of the outgroup would fit the stereotype.

DOES POWER CORRUPT?

The analysis of possible individual differences leading to behavioral confirmation in mixed-power dyads and the exploration of negative effects of behavioral confirmation at the intergroup level has implications for understanding the negative and corrupting influences of power as well. The analyses presented in this chapter suggest several ways in which the familiar adage that "power corrupts" may, in some circumstances, become true through the process of behavioral confirmation, for the potentially negative effects of confirmation may lead to corruption as a result of power.

Perhaps the most obvious of these implications is the potential role of Machiavellianism as a determinant of perceiver-target relationships. To the extent that being high in Machiavellianism will make a person more likely to be a high power perceiver, thus making confirmation more likely, in addition to its impact on the likelihood of a person engaging in arguably corrupt practices (see Christie & Gets, 1970), it is possible that confirmation may become an instrument for corruption. At a minimum, having a stable sense of others as a result of a getting to know motivation may give the high Machiavellian information needed to successfully manipulate others. At the other extreme, shaping behavior through confirmation processes may itself be a tool of manipulation for the high Machiavellian.

Individual differences in need for power are also potentially implicated in the possible corrupting influence of power. Research on the need for power has suggested that those high in the disposition may be particularly likely to engage in some negative practices related to corruption, such as backing out of or reneging on agreements (e.g., Terhune, 1968) and engaging in emotional and physical abuse of others (e.g., Dutton & Strachan, 1987; Winter & Stewart, 1978). These practices may be particularly characteristic of those high in the need for power who do not score very high on measures of social responsibility (e.g., Winter & Barenbaum, 1985). These findings, coupled with the possibility that need for power may relate to becoming a high power perceiver, suggest that, like Machiavellianism, for people high in need for power, behavioral confirmation may be either a concomitant phenomenon or an actual tool for engaging in manipulative and perhaps corrupt relationships with others.

Finally, the potential for behavioral confirmation at the individual level to influence processes and relationships at the intergroup level suggests a final way in which power, through confirmation, may corrupt. To the extent that behavioral confirmation is used to reinforce existing stereotypes about different social groups, confirmation may play a role in reinforcing and strengthening existing social stereotypes—stereotypes that may have the negative effects of sustaining existing inequitable social structures.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

As we have seen, power may be prevalent in social interactions. Even in dyadic interactions that don't appear to be marked by role related power differences, features of the situation and the people within often create power differentials. In intergroup settings, status differences often play out in ways that mimic power, creating situations where stereotype-based interactions become power-tinged interactions.

We have argued that this ubiquity of power differences has crucial implications for the dynamics and outcomes of social interaction. Indeed, the very process of getting acquainted with an interaction partner, the first step in any interaction sequence or relationship, provides rich opportunities for the processes of power to come into play. High power individuals elicit perceptual and behavioral confirmation from their interaction partners of lesser power.

The nature of such influences of power differences is due to the differing motivations that high and low power people bring with them to interactions. High power people act in the service of getting to know their interaction partner, whereas low power people act in the service of getting along with their partner. These patterns of motivations, when held on the part of a perceiver and a target, respectively, are the very ones that lead to behavioral confirmation.

In addition to discussing important implications for the impact of power differences on interpersonal interactions, ways in which broadening an understanding of the power dynamics influence our understanding of intergroup processes—specifically the way that stereotypes and outgroup homogeneity effects may influence and be influenced by the dynamics of interpersonal interaction—have been discussed. These intergroup effects suggest that the effects of power may be far more insidious than at first realized. For, as the current analysis has tried to make clear, power is, in a sense, everywhere, coloring and influencing a wide range of social phenomena including that of interpersonal interaction. To seek a full understanding of the nature of social phenomena therefore should involve exploring both the nature and the effects of power in the many and varied domains of social functioning.

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