Theoretical Perspectives on Power and Resource Inequality

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Introduction

Sociological questions about the nature of power and resource inequality are as old as the discipline itself. Inspired by the rise of the industrial revolution and the widespread expansion of the colonial empires in Europe, early thinkers in sociology grappled with "big picture" questions of how modernization, cultural expansion, and mass production would influence gradients of power and resource inequality across the globe (Marx [1867] 1967; Weber [1918] 1968). Since then, sociological analyses have become more finely focused and refined. In what follows we examine sociological conceptions of power and resource inequality with the primary intention to overview the main perspectives within social psychology on these topics. We begin by generally defining the phenomenon of interest and covering some of the thematic threads woven throughout this literature. In each section we review both historical conceptions of power and more contemporary theories of power and inequality that have emerged within the last half century. Overall, this chapter is organized by how various theorists conceptualize and theorize power and resource inequality as interrelated phenomena.

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Defining Power: Various Views

In writing this chapter one of the first roadblocks we encountered was how to define "power" and "resource inequality." In the broadest sense power refers to the ability to create or have some impact on the world, and resources refer to anything of value. Arguably, most if not all of sociology can be seen as addressing some facet of power and resource inequality. To get a handle on this vast sociological terrain, we decided to begin reviewing the literature to see how others have defined these terms, and we discovered that they are sometimes closely linked. First, power and resource inequality are inherently relational phenomena. To say that one has power or an unequal share of resources is to imply that one has an advantage over or beyond another entity. Theories of power and inequality, as such, tend to focus on relational qualities (i.e., how resources flow through power relations or networks, how definitions or meanings are constructed and controlled across relations and over time). In terms of relational qualities, power historically has been defined in terms of either *control* or *benefit* (see Willer 1999 for a good discussion). Weber defines power in terms of control. For Weber, power is "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance"

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([1918] 1968, p. 53). Lukes echoes Weber in that "A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests" (1974, p. 37). Many other social theorists, including French and Raven (1968), Wrong (1979), Dahrendorf (1959) and Dahl (1957) link power to some form of agency or control. Power in this sense implies, but does not require, resource inequality. Other theorists link power more directly to resource inequality or benefit. Hobbes ([1651] 1985) asserted that power is "a man's present means to any future goods." Thus, the acquisition of goods (i.e., resources) is a function of power, and thus power and resource inequality are inextricably related. Many modern theorists have continued in this tradition. For instance, in contemporary social exchange theory power is (*i*) a *structural capacity* linked to exclusion or dependence, or (*ii*) a *concrete event* in which one individual benefits at the expense of another. Modern theorists refer to the former as *structural power* or *power potential*, and the latter as *power use* or *power exercise*. Although the terms are sometimes conflated, power is theoretically distinct from other relational concepts such as *influence* (which is voluntarily accepted), *force* (wherein the target has no choice but to comply), and *authority* (which involves a request from a legitimate social position). French and Raven (1968) recognized these distinctions over 4 decades ago and they remain useful today (Zelditch 1992).

Although there are many ways to dissect the literature on power and resource inequality we see four broad themes that traverse the social psychological landscape. We explore and elaborate each of these themes, in turn, in the sections that follow. First, perhaps the most prevalent idea in this literature is that power has the capacity to divide, create differential benefits, or be an exploitative force in social relationships. Here power is presumed to be the causal agent that produces resource inequality (but see Berger et al. 1985 for the converse argument). This theme appears in the conflict approaches of Marx where power and resource inequality reside with those who control the means of production, in Dahrendorf's (1959) thesis that class-based power resides with those who control and define authority, and in the many network approaches that seek to predict resource inequality from the power associated with network location. The second theme emphasizes the human capacity to create, control, and reproduce symbolic meanings in establishing power relations. This perspective focuses on the capacity for powerful people to symbolically define situations in ways that foster and maintain resource inequality. A key issue in this tradition is to determine how symbolic interpretations at the micro level interact with or are affected by larger macro-structural constraints. The third theme stands in direct opposition to the first and is perhaps the most counter-intuitive. This line of inquiry documents how power can create solidarity, unity, and cohesion among individuals (Bacharach and Lawler 1980, 1981; Durkheim 1915). The fundamental insight is that power can be a positive force that brings individuals together around a common task or activity, and as a result, creates positive emotional experiences, a sense of solidarity or cohesion, and increases long term commitment. The final theme we cover represents more of an ontological approach than a unified and coherent body of theory and research. Many researchers over the past half century have sought to document how power processes connect with or produce a variety of other social psychological phenomena such as status distinctions (Lovaglia 1994; Thye 2000), emotional reactions (Lawler 2001), perceptions (Simpson and Borch 2005), and perceived legitimacy (Della Fave 1980). We provide a select review of these areas focusing on the more contemporary findings.

The Differentiating Aspects of Power

Given the focus of this volume our emphasis will obviously be on the social psychological mechanisms that undergird power and resource inequality. At the same time, to provide a comprehensive and more balanced approach we seek to anchor our review in the broader sociological landscape. Social psychologists have a diverse set of opinions regarding how power processes are transformed into resource inequality (see also Hunt's chapter on ideology in this volume). One

basic question that inevitably comes up is how power and resource inequalities are maintained over time. Why is it that those exploited by power and resource divisions do not leave the relation or revolt in an effort to restore equality? Numerous social psychological mechanisms have been postulated to support the temporal stability of power and resource inequality. For instance, Marx postulated that a sense of false consciousness—the idea that those exploited are unaware of their exploitation or lack of upward mobility—creates a kind of panacea for those who are lower in power. Della Fave (1980) theoretically illustrates that individuals who occupy powerful positions in social networks can be seen as more deserving of their resource accumulations, and thus their power exercise comes to be seen as legitimate. Stolte (1983) tests and finds support for Della Fave's assessment. More recently, Sutphin and Simpson (2009) argue and present experimental data suggesting that resource inequality is seen as legitimate when self-evaluations are congruent with resource levels (see Walker, this volume). Over time a variety of other mechanisms including status, emotions, cohesion, trust and reciprocity are theorized to emerge and to some extent stabilize power relations (see Berger et al. 1998; Lawler and Yoon 1996; Molm 2003a, b). We review these other correlates in a later section of this chapter.

Exchange Theories of Power and Resource Inequality

Perhaps the most formal and well-tested theories of power and resource inequality can be found in the social exchange tradition. Contemporary exchange theories of power and resource inequality can be traced to the early work of Homans (1958), Blau (1964), Coleman (1963), and Dahl (1957). Adapting ideas from behaviorism and operant psychology, Homans and Blau emphasized the behavioral underpinnings of power and exchange. In particular, a number of assertions characterize this overall approach, including the ideas that (i) rewards determine the probability of an action, (ii) stimulus-response connections generalize to other *similar* stimuli, (iii) more valued actions are more likely to be performed, and (iv) the more often a person receives a reward, the more satiated the person becomes. Early scholars adopted a strategy of theory building that entails a kind of psychological reductionism predicated on the idea that psychological propositions are the most general in form, and thus, social relations are best studied in behaviorist terms.

Based on the exchange framework, Thibaut and Kelley (1959) offered what was perhaps the first formal theory of power and resource inequality. They assert that individuals evaluate their current relationship against some standard, or comparison level (CL). The theory claims that actors assess the attractiveness of a relationship by comparing their focal relationship to the benefits expected from other relations (CL_{ALT}). The power of actor A over B is defined in terms of benefit: power is "A's" ability to affect the quality of outcomes attained by "B." The theory suggests two ways by which this may occur. *Fate control* exists when actor A affects actor B's outcome by changing her/his own behavior, independent of B's action. For example, if irrespective of what B does, B receives $ 10 when A chooses behavior 1, and $ 20 when A chooses behavior 2, then A has fate control over B. *Behavior control* exists when the rewards obtained by B are a function of both A and B's behavior. To illustrate, when A can make rewards obtained by B contingent on B's actions (A dictates that behavior 1 by B yields $ 20 for B, while behavior 2 by B yields $ 40 for B), then A can control the behavior of B. In retrospect, this theory is notable as it is one of the first to highlight the importance of relational interdependence among agents.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Richard Emerson (1972a, b), along with several of his students, developed a theory of power that had a major influence on scholarship relating power and resource inequality (Cook and Emerson 1978; Stolte and Emerson 1977). His *power dependence theory* is an extension of the earlier work of Homans, Blau, and others in the behavioral tradition. At the time, most prior work on power in exchange and rational choice theory applied to dyads. Emerson cast power processes in

broader terms. His fundamental insight was that dyads do not exist in a vacuum. Rather, dyads are most often embedded in some sort of social network. Thus, in analyzing a dyad, he asserted that one must consider how dyads are connected to other dyads—that is, the larger network in which any focal dyad is embedded. Emerson theorized two kinds of connections among dyads. A *negative connection* exists when interaction in one dyad reduces interaction in another (e.g., dating one partner normally reduces other dating relations). A *positive connection* exists when interaction in one dyad promotes interaction in another (e.g., exchange with a dean normally entails exchange with her or his assistant). The attention to dyadic connectedness gave Emerson's theorizing a decidedly structural theme; his were essentially network-embedded dyads. Emerson's fundamental insight shifted the focus of theory and research over the next several decades.

The original power dependence theory conceptualizes two actors, A and B, who possess commodities *x* and *y*, respectively. Power dependence theory asserts that the power of A over B (P_{AB}) is a function of the dependence of B on A (D_{BA}), such that $P_{AB} = D_{BA}$. Dependence, in turn, is a function of two key factors: the availability of alternative exchange relations and the extent to which the actors value those relations. To illustrate, imagine a computer manufacturer (A) who must purchase specialized parts from a supply dealer (B). When computer parts are not widely available from other suppliers, but there are many computer manufacturers who need parts, then due to limited availability of parts the computer manufacturer (A) is more dependent on the supplier (B), or $D_{AB} > D_{BA}$. When the computer builder values parts more than the supplier values customers, then A is again more dependent on B ($D_{AB} > D_{BA}$). In both cases the theory predicts B has power over A.

Emerson's original power dependence theory has given rise to numerous other lines of work on power and resource inequality. For instance, Molm (1988, 1990) has used the power dependence framework to explicate differences in reward-based power (i.e., when A's power resided in B's dependence on A) and punishment-based power (i.e., power based in A's decision to punish B or not). She finds that punishment-based power is exercised less frequently than reward-based power because it entails potential costs (Molm 1997a). Along these same lines, Lawler (1992) has developed a theory of power that includes both dependence-based power and punitive-based power. This work shows how structures of interdependence can promote either punitive or conciliatory bargaining tactics. Bargaining tactics, in turn, are theorized to mediate power exercise in negotiations. Both lines of work extend the basic power dependence framework and affirm the importance of dependence in the overall production of power and resource inequality.

Owing to its behavioral roots, Emerson's (1972a, b) power dependence theory relies heavily on the principle of satiation to predict how resource inequalities emerge. Moving from the dyad to the simplest network structure of two "connected" dyads, consider the following simple 3-branch network, A_1—B—A_2. Assume that in this simple market B can exchange with one A or the other, but not both. Both Stolte and Emerson (1977) and Cook and Emerson (1978) found that in this network, B earns significantly more resources than A. Both results are consistent with Emerson's satiation model in that B is exchanging more frequently, and therefore is satiated more quickly. By definition, as satiation occurs B should demand more of the resources to continue exchange. At the same time some exchange theorists questioned whether or not satiation is the principle driving power use.

Willer and associates have asserted that exclusion, not satiation, is the basis for network-based power. Brennan (1981) conducted what turned out to be a critical test between "satiation" and "exclusion" as the basis of power in the 3-branch structure. In that test, B could exchange *independently* with each of the As on each round. (i.e., the central actor could exchange with both connected partners at every opportunity). In terms of satiation, this means the central actor has more opportunity to earn money compared to the peripheral actors, and thus should be satiated more quickly. If the central actor is satiated with the acquisition of money, then money should be-

come less valued to the central actor over time (again, by definition). As such, the peripheral actors would need to offer more money to complete each subsequent exchange. However, when this test was actually conducted, power for the central actor did not emerge, as As and Bs exchanged at even rates over the course of the study. However, when only one exchange was allowed per round, B had a significant amount of power and earned more resources than either A. The comparison between these two simple conditions suggests that exclusion, not satiation, is the mechanism driving power and resource inequality in networks of exchange. In conditions where the peripheral As are excluded because one or the other (but not both) may exchange with B, there emerges a classical bidding war among the As. As each peripheral essentially tries to outbid the other by offering more and more profit to the central actor, the central actor enjoys increasing levels of resources. Thus, exclusion appears to be the mechanism driving power. The significance of this is not to suggest dependence is unimportant (as those who can be excluded are still more dependent), but rather to illustrate that it is the properties of structures that create power, not the underlying behavioral principles. With respect to the exchange of money (which may or may not produce satiation) the lesson is that the ability to exclude others from profit places one in a powerful position.

The idea that exclusion drives power is the centerpiece of Willer's *Elementary Theory,* which is ultimately based on the classical understandings of power and resource inequality found in Marx and Weber (Willer 1999). Elementary theory anchors power in the ability for some actors to *exclude* others from valued goods. The theory identifies three kinds of social relations, defined by the kinds of sanctions found in each. A *sanction* is any action transmitted from one individual and received by another. *Exchange* occurs when A and B mutually transmit positive sanctions (e.g., I buy the wings, you buy the beer). *Coercion* occurs when a negative sanction is transmitted for a positive sanction (e.g., as when a thief threatens bodily harm for your wallet). *Conflict* occurs when A and B each transmit negative sanctions (e.g., when soldiers in foxholes throw grenades at one another).

In addition to these three types of sanctions, elementary theory identifies three kinds of power structures. *Strong power* structures are those that only contain only two kinds of positions: high-power positions that can never be excluded and low-power positions, one of which must always be excluded. The classic example is the 3-person dating network in which B can date one A, but not both (A_1—B—A_2). B is powerful because B is always guaranteed a date on any particular night, while one A must be excluded. Strong power networks promote extreme levels of resource inequality. In experimental tests, where participants must negotiate the division of 24 points on each relation, both simulation and empirical data find that resource inequalities emerge where B earns nearly all of the profit (Markovsky et al. 1988). *Equal power* networks contain only one set of structurally identical positions, such as dyads or triangles. Positions in equal power networks are said to be structurally isomorphic. In *weak power* networks no position must be excluded, but some positions can be excluded. The simplest weak power structure is the 4-actor line (A—B—C—D). Note that if B and C exchange, A and D are excluded. Studies find that this produces a slight power advantage for the positions that need not be excluded (B and C in this case).

At the heart of elementary theory is a resistance model that takes into consideration (i) the maximum profit one could earn from exchange, (ii) the profit one would earn if no exchange is completed, and (iii) the offer that is currently on the table. An actor *i's* resistance to exchange is defined using the following equation:

$$R_i = \frac{P_i \max - P_i}{P_i - P_i \text{con}}$$

P_i max represents *i's* best hope or maximum profit from the exchange, P_i represents the payoff if the offer on the table is accepted, and $P_i$con represents the payoff when exchange is not complete. The numerator captures how far away the current offer (i.e., the offer being considered) is from one's best hope. The denominator represents the benefit of consummating exchange relative to no exchange at all. The model assumes

that actors balance these motives when negotiating exchange. The theory predicts that when two actors, *i* and *j*, exchange, they do so at the point of equi-resistance. That is, exchange is predicted when the resistance is mutually balanced for *i* and *j* such that

$$R_i = \frac{P_i \max - P_i}{P_i - P_i \text{con}} = \frac{P_j \max - P_j}{P_j - P_j \text{con}} = R_j$$

Overall, elementary theory has been tested in a variety of contexts and using a variety of different experimental protocols. To date, it is perhaps the best overall predictor of power and resource inequality in social networks (see especially Skvoretz and Willer 1991, 1993; Willer 1999).

Sparked by Emerson's network-oriented view, much theoretical activity in the 1980s and early 1990s was devoted to the following question: How does the shape of any given social network affect power and the division of resources when the occupants negotiate exchanges with one another? Competing mathematical indices were offered from equidependence theory (Cook and Yamagishi 1992), game theory (Bienenstock and Bonacich 1992), utility theory (Friedkin 1992), identity theory (Burke 1997) and network exchange theory (Markovsky et al. 1988). Each index or measure of power offers unique predictions for power exercise based on the shape of the network and rules of exchange (see Skvoretz and Willer 1993 or van de Rijt and van Assen 2008 for comparisons and tests of various measures). In 1992, an entire issue of *Social Networks* was devoted to comparing and contrasting these approaches. In retrospect, the significance of this competition was to promote rapid theory growth, increased formalization, and aid in the discovery of new phenomena.

Overall, the above branches of social psychology have much to say about the connections between power and resource inequality. Work in the power dependence tradition points to relational interdependencies as the basis of resource inequality. Simply stated, those who have greater *access* to valued goods or themselves *possess* highly valued goods have power over those who do not. From this perspective, to have power is to use power, and this itself produces resource inequality. Elementary theory tells us that oftentimes those dyadic interdependencies are functions of the capacity for the network to produce the exclusion. The resistance model implies that the material conditions around us (what is my best hope or maximal profit in this relation versus what happens if I fail to make an exchange) determines your level of power in relations. Like power dependence theory, the presumption is that those who have power will use it, and again, this is the basis for resource inequality. Further, if one can quantify those best hopes and worst fears, the resistance model makes precise, ratio-level predictions for exchange outcomes and resource inequalities. The next section focuses not on material conditions and dependence, but on the meanings and interpretations associated with power and resource inequality.

The Symbolic Aspects of Power

As within the social exchange tradition, there has been considerable debate among symbolic interactionists concerning the nature of power and its relation to resource inequality. In addition, symbolic interactionists have been at pains to deal with criticisms that crescendoed in the 70s and questioned whether the perspective has the means to say anything useful about power beyond the immediate situation, thereby (allegedly) posing a serious challenge to its sociological relevance (Meltzer et al. 1975; see also Coser 1975 and Worsley 1974). Yet a number of theoretical and empirical advances, reviewed below, explicitly or implicitly call the challenge itself into question, pointing out that its bases reflect misrepresentations and the fact that work rooted in the interactionist tradition can (and has) been used to further our understanding of power and resource inequality. Moreover, whether these approaches are situated squarely within the interactionist tradition or whether they offer unique syntheses that incorporate concepts and theoretical views from other perspectives, what these theories have that other theories of power and resource inequality mostly lack is patently interactionist. The

foundational ideas are that (i) power is an ongoing and collectively *negotiated* social process, and (ii) power rests largely on the ability to define the situation and establish shared definitions of reality. That is to say, this tradition emphasizes that power cannot be understood without taking meanings into account. Yet, as clarified below, interactionist approaches to power and resource inequality also share some points of focus with other approaches that we review. To the extent that this fact is more widely recognized and appreciated, the cross fertilization of approaches through simultaneous attention to both structure and process, however conceived, promises a more refined understanding of power and resource inequality in small groups and larger organizational institutions.

Whatever the specific approach taken, interactionist examinations of questions surrounding power and resource inequality all agree, either explicitly or implicitly, that the longstanding critique of an astructural bias (Meltzer et al. 1975) inherent in the interactionist perspective is false, at least partially so. In other words, symbolic interactionism (SI) does *not* fail to deal adequately with the opportunities and constraints of social structure. To show why, symbolic interactionists provide a variety of analyses of power and resource inequality, and support them with much empirical work and original evidence (reviewed below). While in agreement in their response to the (unfounded) critique of astructural bias, interactionist approaches disagree on what issues should be addressed in analyses of power and resource inequality, how these issues might be most fruitfully examined, and how future theoretical and empirical research ought to proceed. For the most part, points of overt or implied debate concern two broad issues: (i) the most productive way to conceive the link between power at the local level and extra-local inequalities—including whether making a conceptual distinction between "micro" and "macro" is even analytically desirable; and, (ii) the concept of power itself—namely whether past interactionist work already supplies a clear and useful concept of power, or whether the concept must be fleshed out. In addition, some interactionist approaches to understanding power and resource inequality draw explicit attention to the fact that power as a process of negotiation can be both divisive *as well as* integrating. This unique insight, as we shall see, stands as one obvious and important point of overlap between interactionist treatments of power and resource inequality and those tied to other theories within social psychology.

Linking Power and Resource Inequality

In his description of "New Directions Within Symbolic Interactionism," Musolf (1992) summarized and synthesized a decade-and-a-half of what he took to be SI's best efforts to address the once accurate criticism of astructural bias. Such efforts involve the articulation of links between what the perspective knows best (negotiated communication processes at the micro level) and what it formerly had, in Musolf's view, all but neglected (community structures at the macro level). According to Musolf, the direction that SI had taken retained its traditional focus on negotiated meaning, human agency, and indeterminism, while incorporating a new focus on structural constraints; i.e., a "macrosociological concern with conflict, power, institutions, and ideology" (p. 173). In doing so, SI had begun to evolve a view of power as a process involving human agency, struggle, and resistance playing out within the broader terrain of institutions, structural inequalities such as gender and race, and cultural ideology. The result, in Musolf's view, was a realigned SI that had much to say about how macrosociological inequalities are reproduced and sometimes resisted and changed through their repeated local negotiation in everyday life. Properly understood, SI conceives of social attributes such as gender, race, and class as structural categories that impose overarching constraints on everyday interaction in terms of the ability to influence the construction of shared definitions of reality. This contributes to the reproduction of inequality in micro relations but also, in terms of agency, provides the larger context within which the less powerful struggle against resource disadvantage by attempting to

negotiate the meanings of structural categories and attendant situational realities. As Musolf (1992) argues, for example, Hammond's (1980) research shows how female medical students, in order to level the playing field and increase their chances of success, have had to invoke special "vocabularies of motive" during interaction with male peers to redefine the situation and counteract the environing belief that females, *because* they are female, do not have what it takes to be doctors. Thus for SI, power and its relation to resource inequality (e.g., attaining the degree required to have a rewarding career in medicine) involves a dynamic interplay of *both* processual *and* structural forces and should be analyzed as such. So, if the criticism of astructural bias were once true, it no longer applied so obviously at the time of Musolf's (1992) review. That said, Musolf concedes that SI could still do more to elucidate the interplay of structural constraint and meaning negotiation as the thrust of its developing contribution to a multi-level understanding of power inequalities.

More recently, Dennis and Martin (2005) offered another argument against the alleged criticism that SI is "unable to adequately conceptualize 'macro' phenomena such as social structure, patterns of inequality and power" (p. 191). However, whereas Musolf had argued that the criticism was *originally* on target and had only been overcome through a concerted theoretical and empirical response, Dennis and Martin (2005) argue that SI has *never* neglected matters of power, resource inequality, and social structure, but rather it has addressed them on its own idiographic terms—terms that "reflect the fundamental premises of…its pragmatist tradition" (p. 196). When it comes to studies of deviance and education, for instance, Dennis and Martin describe how interactionists have examined power relationships and their uncertain, contingent, and unanticipated consequences in "real-life settings," showing the myriad ways in which meanings delivered from larger "cultural patterns and institutional constraints" are actively negotiated by individuals *in situ*, and all without reifying concepts such as power and structure in the mode of sociology proper (p. 201). Thus while interactionist studies of deviance, education, and other social phenomena may well have "deepened macrosociological analyses of power and inequality," asking interactionists to do even more to shore up mainstream sociology is antithetical to the perspective's role as a "*coherent theoretical alternative* to those [mainstream] approaches [original emphasis]" (p. 204). In short, Dennis and Martin prescription for SI's role in conceptualizing and analyzing power and resource inequality is this: "[E]nduring differentials in the *capacity* [emphasis added] of some people to do things to others…must be understood as the outcomes, over time, of social processes—often quite prosaic—which ultimately produce patterns of decisive advantages and disadvantages, often involving the accumulation (or loss) of significant resources—money, land, military might, prestige, and so on" (p. 208). These processes and highly variable, situationally negotiated capacities, they argue, cannot be described with universals and cannot be abstracted from their moment-to-moment creation, and so trying to fit SI into the current of mainstream sociology or social psychology (e.g., Musolf's effort) is a sell-out that betrays the perspective's theoretical and philosophical foundations of Mead's pragmatism.

In yet another interactionist approach to analyzing power and inequality, Schwalbe and colleagues (2000) agree with Dennis and Martin (2005) on two key points: (i) inequalities cannot be understood apart from the face-to-face processes of negotiation that (re)produce them; and, (ii) from the standpoint of SI, it does not make sense to try and link micro action to macro structure in the usual sense. However, Schwalbe et al. (2000) offer a unique take on the micro-macro issue that is quite distinct from the resolutely anti-nomothetic neopragmatism underlying Dennis and Martin's reading of SI. In short, Schwalbe et al. (2000) argue that "the problem is not one of linking action to structure, but one of linking action *across times and places* [emphasis added]" (p. 439). Theoretically, the problem is resolved by focusing on how action and the negotiation of meaning in a local setting is linked to the actions or anticipated actions of people outside the setting

based on their resources. Thus the structural force that guides or constrains action in a local setting is actors' sense of what others outside the setting will do, or *could do*, to define the situation given their resources. When it comes to conceptualizing and analyzing power and resource inequality, then, "the key analytic question is not about resources [per se] or their distribution, but about how resources are *used* [original emphasis], in any given time and place, to create and reproduce patterns of action and experience," including inequality (p. 440). But unlike Dennis and Martin, Schwalbe and colleagues do not view such use of resources as beyond any sort of "bird's eye" comparison across time and place, but instead see four "generic processes" at the heart of the reproduction of inequality across settings: othering, subordinate adaptation, boundary maintenance, and emotion management. While we will not go into the details of these processes here, the point is that Schwalbe and his colleagues, in our view, offer something of a meta-theoretical compromise that stresses the contingencies of interaction and meaning negotiation in local settings but also the usefulness of identifying universal processes that capture interaction. Such an approach facilitates the development of general sociological knowledge (Cohen 1989), and in so doing helps makes sense of the body of interactionist research by revealing "the common analytic ground of qualitative studies of disparate settings and groups" (Schwalbe et al. 2000, p. 421).

Unlike Schwalbe et al. (2000) and Dennis and Martin (2005), other contemporary theorists bring us full circle to Musolf's (1992) approach insofar as they have not seen it fit to reject differentiation among theoretical explanations in terms of the scale of analysis. For example, Hallett (2007, p. 148) provides a "meso-level account of the interactional-institutional link" in application to power processes within an educational institution. In this account, Hallett cleverly integrates Goffman's micro-social analysis of the "interaction order" with Bourdieu's institutional-level analysis of symbolic power, capitalizing on the strengths of each, and in such a way that overcomes the limitations of both the former (i.e., too heavy a focus on the "here-and-now") as well as the latter (i.e., over-determined structuralism). The result is a distinctive "negotiated order" synthesis that explains how micro interactions involving deference and demeanor are "enabled and constrained by institutional pressures, local contexts, and features of the immediate situation" (p. 149). In short, economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital are all resources existing in "social space" that shape specific patterns of deference and demeanor in micro-interactional settings.

Conceptualizing Power

Despite their differences on the micro-macro issue, the interactionist approaches to power and resource inequality reviewed above are unified in their view of society as a "negotiated order." However, one of the drawbacks of this orienting strategy, generally speaking, is that it is limited by a rather poor conceptualization of power (Hall 1997; Hallett 2007). Hallett (2007) addresses this issue head on, and in fact, the overarching goal of his integration of Bourdieu's arguments and Goffman's interactionism is to provide a clear, usable conceptualization of symbolic power with broad application. In line with Lukes' (1974) analysis of the consequences of take-for-granted background meanings, "power is *symbolic* [original emphasis], it involves control over the meanings and definitions that provide a guide for action" (Hallett 2007, p. 166). Despite their differences in articulating the link between structural and processual contingencies of power and resource inequality, Hallett's definition clarifies SI's unique contribution to the study of power and resource inequality: SI is *the* perspective that treats symbolic meanings and definitions and their consequences for action most seriously.

Years earlier, Luckenbill (1979) was among the first to raise the spectre of the conceptualization issue by arguing that interactionism "lacks a coherent conception of power" (p. 97). To that point, he argues that interactionists had either failed to define the concept in their work despite its central importance, or they had borrowed an existing atomistic conception of power (usually from psychology) that was not consistent with the basic assumptions

of SI. In an effort to correct this problem, Luckenbill offered a precisely defined concept of power that he argued is consistent with the interactionist perspective. Specifically, he argued that in order to line up with SI, "power should be defined as a particular relation which develops and changes over the course of joint action, not simply as some attribute or capacity which people acquire and use against others" (p. 98). Stated differently, power is a *collective transaction* that occurs between actors *in a relational unit* who *jointly coordinate* their actions toward a *common objective*. One of the main strengths of this conceptualization, according to Luckenbill, is the fact that its key terms are abstract. Accordingly, the framework can be used just as easily at the largest level (international power) as it can be at the smallest level (interpersonal power), thus showing its utility in providing an answer to the micro-macro issue as well. However, Luckenbill pointed out that processes at higher levels are likely to involve additional complexities. For example, "… the larger the transaction [i.e., representatives of political states compared to individuals representing their own interests], the more extensive the decision-making processes of the source and target" (p. 109). The insights that Luckenbill (1979) offers along these lines may have important implications for perspectives on power and resource inequality beyond interactionism, especially the structural social psychological approaches reviewed earlier in this chapter given they are characteristically multi-level in their foci (Lawler et al. 1993). To illustrate, Luckenbill's (1979) claim suggests that, in Emerson's (1992a, b) terms, when total mutual dependence is high we should expect to see more careful deliberation, increased cognitive activity, and longer transaction times. Congruently, Luckenbill sees his conceptual framework as particularly promising where the emphasis is on understanding how power as a "joint act" unfolds (p. 110).

From Power to Cohesion

Among interactionist and even other approaches, Luckenbill's conceptual framework stands out in emphasizing that power and resource inequality can be seen as involving more than conflict processes and zero-sum outcomes. In his view, individuals can also use their resources to foster integration in social relations. In fact, it is rather surprising that more interactionist approaches to understanding the nature of power and resources have not focused more on the integrating, order producing aspects of power, especially given that SI has "traditionally emphasized the harmonious side of social life" (Luckenbill 1979, p. 97).

There are other notable exceptions besides Luckenbill, however. Hallett (2003) states that one of the "virtues" of his theory of symbolic power and organizational culture is that it has "the capacity to explain conflict *and* integration [emphasis added]" (p. 129). He predicts, for example, that the likelihood of integration (as opposed to conflict) among those with greater and lesser power to define the situation increases as the number of "audiences" in the social setting decreases—in essence, as heterogeneity is reduced. There is an interesting link between this strain of SI research and a body of work in network theory. While not widely recognized as an interactionist theory, Friedkin's social influence network theory (e.g., Friedkin 1998, this volume; Friedkin and Johnsen 1990, 1999, 2011) provides a multi-level account of how, for example, the "centrality" of a person's position in a larger social system (i.e., a person's power and control of resources, such as information and skills) enters into the macro process by which patterns of agreements emerge in the system as well as the interactional process by which more and less powerful persons "'mutually adjust' to one another's attitudes and cognitively integrate conflicting viewpoints" (Kalkhoff et al. 2010). Building upon SI's focus on the importance of the process by which shared understandings come about in complexly differentiated social systems, an important implication of the theory is that the content of shared norms in groups, subgroups, and larger organizational forms "must be consistent with the social stratification (or more general pattern of inequality) of interpersonal influences" (Friedkin 2001, p. 167). Attention to the cooperative aspects of power in work that draws on the basic principles of SI is the bridge

to theoretical formulations in social psychology that highlight the role of "mutual dependence" and integrating emotional processes in explanations of power and resource inequality. We now turn to these topics.

The Cooperative Aspects of Power

Whereas our review to this point illustrates how power can be an exploitative differentiating phenomenon, as Friedkin (2001) and strands of symbolic interactionism suggest, power processes also have the capacity to unite, coalesce, and bring individuals together through structures of mutual dependence. Recall that power in the network tradition is defined as a structural capacity linked to dependence or exclusion, and this is distinct from force wherein the target has no choice but to comply. The fundamental insight from this line of work is that power relations that entail high mutual dependence (i.e., in which people need one another) can unleash emotions and perceptions that bring people together around common tasks or activities. In the early 1980s, Bacharach and Lawler theorized the distinction between relative power and total power (Bacharach and Lawler 1980, 1981; see also Emerson 1972b, p. 63). *Relative power* entails a zero-sum notion of power that captures one individual's power vis-à-vis another person's power. It is defined as the difference between A's dependence on B, versus B's dependence on A. Generally speaking, most of the work in contemporary exchange theory, the social networks arena, symbolic interaction, and organizational theory is directed at understanding relative power differences. *Total power* is defined as the sum of each actor's power (see Bacharach and Lawler 1981; Molm 1987). Total power is essentially "mutual dependence" in Emerson's (1972a, b) terms, which he conceived of as the structural foundation for social cohesion. In relations where total power is high, individuals are more dependent on one another for valued goods compared to relations where total power is low. The overall implication is that greater total power generates more commitment behavior, in part because there is more at stake and individuals need one another to produce benefit. Thus, there is a direct theoretical link between power and the production of commitment. Next we briefly flesh out the alternative mechanisms through which the two are connected.

Commitment is broadly defined as the strength of an attachment to another social unit such as a group, organization, or community (Kanter 1968, 1972). In the abstract, commitment represents a person-to-group bond that is distinct from inter-personal bonds. Parsons (1951) suggested that person-to-group attachments could involve instrumental (i.e., utilitarian), affective (i.e., emotional), or normative (i.e., legitimated) bonds and saw these as an important foundation for social order. Kanter (1968, 1972) echoes these distinctions in her discussion of commitment as continuance, cohesion, and control. Important for our purposes, both Parsons (1951) and Kanter (1968, 1972) recognize the instrumental and affective foundations for commitment.

The traditional exchange-theory explanation views power linked to commitment via instrumental conditions, in particular, uncertainty reduction. The argument is that commitment develops because repeated exchanges foster a sense of predictability in the situation (Emerson 1981; Kollock 1994). Consider a watch manufacturer who repeatedly buys parts from a supply dealer. Given a series of successful transactions, the two should come to learn more about one another, develop a common set of procedures or expectations for the exchange, and perhaps learn to trust one another given a history of successful encounters. These represent "benefits" in an uncertain market of power relations where the properties of alternative partners are unknown or unknowable (Kollock 1994, 1999).

An alternative (though not competing) linking of power and commitment is found in the theory of relational cohesion (Lawler et al. 2000; Lawler and Yoon 1996, 1998). The theory of relational cohesion explicitly links conditions of power (interdependence) to relational outcomes (cohesion and commitment) through the emotions produced by social exchange. Dependence here is defined as the extent to which one actor can provide another with valued outcomes, and

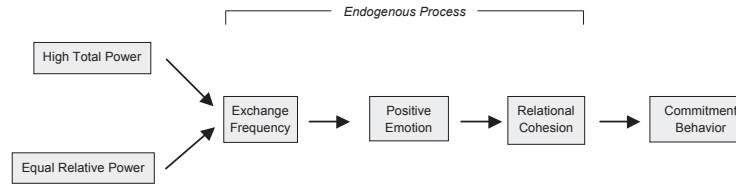

Fig. 2.1 The theory of relational cohesion

vice versa. The theory employs the concepts of relative power as well as total power, as defined above (Emerson 1972b; Lawler 1992). Emotions are conceptualized in terms of pleasure/satisfaction and interest/excitement. Relational cohesion is defined as a perception of the relation itself as coming together or becoming more unified. Commitment is measured behaviorally. In the past, measures of commitment have included (i) staying in the relation given an alternative, (ii) giving small, token unilateral gifts as a symbolic gesture of the relationship, and (iii) cooperating under conditions of risk or malfeasance (i.e., cooperating in a social dilemma). The theory is shown in Fig. 2.1.

The theory presumes that actors are motivated to exchange so they can produce benefits not otherwise attainable. The theory also recognizes, however, that actors have the ability to experience, interpret, and reproduce *emotional reactions* to exchange outcomes. The orienting idea is that the very act of exchange represents joint social activity characterized by problems of coordination and uncertainty. As such, when exchange is successful, actors should experience positive emotional reactions; when exchange is unsuccessful, actors should experience negative emotional reactions. At the heart of the theory, then, is an endogenous process that links conditions of power (dependence or interdependence) to behavioral outcomes (commitment) through positive emotions. This process is conceived as a sequence of moments or steps that must occur for commitment to emerge. That is, repeated exchanges generate positive emotions that, in turn, produce perceptions of relational cohesion. Equal power conditions are predicted to produce more commitment because equal power produces more frequent exchange, thereby unleashing the first step in the endogenous causal chain. This emotional/affective explanation is complementary to the traditional exchange theory account of stability and commitment that centers on how repeated exchange produces uncertainty-reduction (e.g., Kollock 1994). Relational cohesion theory asserts that repeated exchange not only reduces the uncertainties, but it also produces positive emotions that enhance relational cohesion and make the relational tie expressive. Over the years a number of empirical tests have found consistent support for the theory (Lawler et al. 2000, 2006, 2008; Lawler and Yoon 1996, 1998; Thye et al. 2011, Thye et al. 2002; Yoon and Thye 2002). In summary, the theory of relational cohesion provides an account for how power-dependence relations can produce positive emotions and commitment when mutual dependence is high and there are no relative power differences. Power is linked through resource inequality via dependence, and the message is despite power and resource inequalities positive emotions and commitment can nonetheless emerge.

Recent studies in social neuroscience further confirm the fundamental roles of emotions (as opposed to cognitions) and cohesion in contexts where resources are exchanged. Sanfey et al. (2003) used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to explore the neural substrates of cognitive versus emotional processes involved in decision-making during an exchange task. In response to unfair offers from "power hungry" (simulated) human partners, brains scans showed activation in three areas: the *insula* (an area associated with emotions such as anger and disgust), the *dorsolateral prefrontal cortex* (associated with deliberate cognitive processes such as goal maintenance), and the *anterior cingulate cortex* (associated with conflict monitoring). However, activation of cognitive centers during unfair offers was *not* associated with subsequent behavior (i.e., whether participants accepted/rejected offers). Only activation in the emotional centers

(i.e., the insula) was associated with offer acceptance/rejection. The study suggests that in comparison with cognitive considerations, emotions play a more vibrant role in determining responses to power-related actions during the exchange of resources.

A second line of exchange research in social neuroscience examines a phenomenon known as inter-brain synchronization. *Inter-brain synchronization* occurs when brain wave activity across multiple individuals becomes "phase locked," which is sometimes even visually detectable to some extent when raw electroencephalogram (EEG) signals for electrode pairs across two individuals begin to "dance" in harmony as if being driven by a single person (Condon and Ogston 1966). It is well-known across a number of disciplines that "synchronization," generally speaking, is an elemental characteristic of human interaction and bonding—one that is present from the earliest moments of life (Condon and Sander 1974) and takes many rich and varied forms (see Kalkhoff et al. 2011).

In terms of resource exchange, Yun et al. (2008) conducted a study in which 13 pairs of participants sat face-to-face and played one single trial followed by 10 sequential trials of the Ultimatum Game, an exchange task in which two players (a proposer and a responder) explicitly negotiate how to divide up a given sum of money. If the responder accepts the proposer's offer, the sum is split accordingly; if the responder rejects the proposer's offer, both receive nothing. In terms of relational cohesion theory, actors in the Ultimatum Game are equally dependent (i.e., have equal relative power) because neither receives anything if they fail to reach agreement, and total power is fixed as the amount split does not vary. Yet from a traditional exchange-theoretic perspective, the rational strategies in the game are for the proposer to exert power and offer the smallest possible amount (e.g., $1 if dollars are the smallest divisible unit) and for the responder to acquiesce and accept that minimal offer. Yet typically this is not what happens. Meta-analysis reveals that proposers avoid being so greedy and tend to offer what they believe to be *fair* (about 40%), no matter what size the "pie" (Oosterbeek et al. 2003). Shedding light on this interesting fact, EEG results from the Yun et al. (2008) study showed that higher frequency (beta and gamma) oscillations across the exchange partners' fronto-central electrode sites were closely related to the social interaction and exhibited the greatest synchronization. Viewed through the lens of RCT, this makes sense because it is well known that beta band activity correlates with attentional focus (Sanei and Chambers 2007), while gamma band activity has been linked to emotions (Muller et al. 1999; Keil et al. 2001). Between-brain synchronization in these bands may be seen as a reflection of common attentional foci and moods. The significance of this research, in relation to this volume, is to illustrate how power dynamics played out in the Ultimatum Game produce common attentional foci and synchronized (positive) emotional reactions during the exchange of resources, even in a context where the potential for self-driven behavior looms large. The larger implication is that there may be deep biological processes that support positive emotions and commitment even in the context of power and resource inequality.

Power, Resources and Other Social Psychological Processes

The concept of power has been widely studied, and there are many literatures in psychology and sociology showing that power is correlated with a variety of phenomena. Here we review how power and resource inequality relate to other social psychological processes and connect to other social phenomena. Because in many empirical contexts power and resource accumulation is associated with status, honor, or prestige, there has been substantial work examining the relations among power, status, and resource inequality (see also Ridgeway and Nakagawa, this volume). We begin with work that links power, status, and resource inequality, and then we move to recent evidence linking power and perception.

Status, Power and Resource Inequality

Probably because the two often co-vary in every day social relations, there have been multiple efforts to describe the relations between power and status. Kemper and Collins (1990) assert that power and status are central and independent dimensions of social interaction. Kemper (2011) goes even further, asserting that status and power are the central constructs that drive ritual interaction and guide the emotions that link each of us to socially relevant reference groups. Other work examines the relationship between status, power, and resource inequality. For Weber and Homans, power that is used consistently over time is predicted to produce status. Lovaglia (1994) was perhaps the first contemporary theorist to formally link status, power, and resource inequality. He asserts that there are conditions under which those with power are also afforded high status. The idea is that when powerful people exercise power and amass resources, others may (correctly or not) presume that they are also highly competent. Expectations of competence, in turn, are one of the fundamental determinants of status, honor, or prestige (Berger et al. 1977). Thus, power confers status. Yet if those who are disadvantaged by the power differential (i) experience negative emotional reactions to power use, or (ii) have knowledge that the basis for power is either random or structural in nature (i.e., not based on talent or ability), then the relation between power and status is predicted to be attenuated. Lovaglia (1995) tests and finds partial support for these ideas.

Other work sees the converse effect—i.e., that status itself can directly produce power and resource inequality (see also Ridgeway and Nakagawa, this volume). The status value theory of power (Thye 1999, 2000; Thye et al. 2006) explains how status characteristics like race, age, and gender affect the perceived status value of resources, and subsequently, the development of power and resource inequality in exchange relations. The theory applies to relations in which actors (i) are differentiated by multiple salient status characteristics, (ii) have accurate knowledge regarding the status characteristics of each exchange partner, (iii) exchange nominally distinct resources with one another, that are (iv) relevant to the status of each actor. One example would include a setting in which an African-American woman seeks to buy a car from a white male car dealer.

The status value theory of power can be expressed as a series of three logically linked assumptions. The first assumption of the theory claims that the status value associated with actors' characteristics will spread to exchangeable resources (Berger et al. 1972; Berger and Fisek 2006; Thye 2000). For example, a set of golf clubs once owned by former President John F. Kennedy sold for many thousands of dollars when they went to auction. The theory suggests that clubs are highly valued for two reasons. First, President Kennedy is one of the most prestigious of all U.S. presidents, and the activity of golfing is highly relevant to the presidency. In one controlled test, participants in a laboratory study could exchange their own blue poker chips for (i) purple poker chips held by a higher status partner, or (ii) orange poker chips held by a lower status partner (Thye 2000). The results show that participants tried harder to acquire the purple chips, assumed they were generally more important than orange chips, and were willing to accept less money to get them. Importantly, these effects were observed even though all participants were fully aware that orange and purple chips both gave exactly the same payoff at the end of the study. In short, the status of the individual seems to affect the value of things related to that individual. More generally, the results indicate that status characteristics alter the perceived status value of resources.

The second assumption claims that actors who control status-valued resources have a power advantage over those who control less valued resources. Virtually all exchange theories agree that individuals who possess highly valuable goods can extract higher prices for those goods (i.e., as when drug dealers benefit from the sale of narcotics in areas where they dominate the market) (Blau 1964; Burke 1997; Cook and Yamagishi 1992; Emerson 1972a, b; Homans 1958; Molm 1987, 1997b; Thibault and Kelley 1959;

Willer 1999). Even so, value as a determinant of power has been largely unexamined in the exchange tradition. Most exchange theorists simply "fix" the monetary value of goods by holding the payoff constant for each resource unit (Bonacich and Friedkin 1998; Willer 1999). At issue for the status value theory is whether status characteristics incrementally inflate or deflate the perceived value of items held by higher and lower status individuals (Heckathorn 1983a, b). To determine if the value of an object is inflating or deflating, Thye (2000) began by assigning equal monetary value to all resources. These resources are then made relevant to status characteristics, which, according to assumption one above, should increase or decrease their perceived status value.

The final assumption links structural power potential to behavior, stating that actors who have a power advantage receive more resources relative to those who do not. A long history of research indicates that actors in powerful locations do in fact receive favorable exchange rates and thus earn more resources (Willer and Anderson 1981; Cook et al. 1983; Markovsky et al. 1988; Lawler 1992). Thye (1999, 2000; Thye et al. 2006) has shown that status-advantaged actors also receive more resources. In a series of laboratory experiments, the highest status participant received the greatest share of profit from exchange in both dyads and triangles. Thye (2000) reports that in a status-differentiated dyad, the high status member earned 19.05 of 30 points representing significant power use. The same pattern occurred in a status-differentiated triangle (H, L, L) where each person could negotiate with both others. A third experiment demonstrated that status effects countervail "weak power" in the simplest weak power structure, the 4-line (A_1—B_1—B_2—A_2). The central Bs who normally earn slightly more than the peripheral As were believed by the As to be low status; at the same time the As, who are structurally disadvantaged, were believed by the Bs to be high status. That is, the status assignments opposed structural power. The results indicate that "weak power" differences were virtually eliminated; the A-B exchanges were near equality. Overall, the evidence suggests higher status actors earn more in exchange.

Later investigations found a second mechanism linking status to power and resource inequality. Thye et al. (2006) develop a theory of status influence to show how this occurs. That theory asserts that salient status characteristics activate performance expectations in exchange relations, and in turn, those performance expectations affect the beliefs and aspirations of status differentiated exchange partners. There are two corresponding mechanisms. The first is that higher status others should have greater aspirations in the exchange (i.e., expect to earn more). The second is that higher status others should be more influential when they communicate with low status others. Thye et al. (2006) investigated two simple dyadic structures that manipulate the status of the occupants. In each dyad, the goal is to negotiate the division of 25 points when one person has a standing outside offer worth 10 points in the event no agreement is made. The status assignments (H = High, L = Low) in those dyads were as follows: H—25—L—10 and L—25—H—10. It is important to note that the peripheral actor had no knowledge of the standing outside offer, but before each exchange round, the central actor could send a message to the partner indicating, "My outside offer is X," where X is an amount chosen by the central participant. The results indicate two significant trends. First, focusing only on the centrally located participants, high status individuals inflate the communicated size of the actual outside offer while low status actors deflate that value (11.32 versus 9.83, respectively). In short, high status actors lie about the size of the outside offer in a self-serving manner whereas low status actors self-deprecate. Second, communications from high status individuals had greater influence than those from low status individuals, and this translated into a resource advantage for those with high status (14.62 points versus 13.10). In symbolic interactionist terms, higher status others in centrally powerful locations had a greater ability to *define the situation*, determine how actors value items, and in turn, use that local definition to impart power in the immediate situation. Overall, this provides a complementary pathway through which status differences reproduce gradients of power and resource inequality.

The implication is that status itself *is* a resource that actors can use to create and maintain resource inequality. The fact that status is a valued resource explains, for example, why individuals may be willing to exchange money for temporary status recognition (Huberman et al. 2004).

Perception, Power and Resource Inequality

Finally, there is one additional topic that has received broad attention from psychologists and sociologists in recent years. At issue is how power affects perspective taking or the ability to imagine the emotions, motivations, and perspectives of others. The importance of this issue is relevant to a variety of theoretical traditions. An exchange theorist might ask if powerful individuals can sympathize with or imagine the frustration or shame experienced by those excluded from interaction. The symbolic interactionist might question if powerful people have trouble engaging in imaginative rehearsal, role-taking, or viewing the interaction from the perspective of a generalized other (Franks 1976). In both cases the implication is that power presents challenges to interaction, renders tasks of coordination more arduous, and generally hinders perspective taking and empathy.

Recent evidence suggests that indeed, power reduces the ability to take other individuals' perspectives. In a series of recent experiments, Galinsky et al. (2006) asked undergraduate subjects to think of a personal incident in which they had power over another person. They are then asked to draw the letter "E" on their forehead with a non-permanent marker as quickly as possible. One way to do this is to draw the E as if you are reading it yourself, which produces a backward E for any external viewer. The other option is to draw the E from the perspective of the observer, which then yields a backward E from your own perspective. The results indicate subjects primed with power are almost three times as likely to draw the E in a self-oriented direction, suggesting that power limits the ability to take the perspective of another. Follow up studies by Galinsky and associates (2006) indicate that high power individuals are more likely than lower power individuals to (i) focus more heavily on their own vantage point and not take into consideration that others lack information they possess, and (ii) misunderstand the emotional expressions of others and thus have a more difficult time experiencing empathy. On the whole, this line of research suggests that power impacts the ability to understand how other individuals see, think, and feel.

In a similar line of work, Simpson, Markovsky, and Steketee (2011) argue that low-power actors, in general, have more accurate perceptions of the social ties that exist in groups because lacking power leads to more effortful and deliberate (and less automatic) social cognition. Results from an experiment confirmed the argument put forth by Simpson et al. (2011) linking low power to more accurate social (network) perceptions. This finding is important because those who have accurate perceptions about networks are regarded by others as more powerful in a social setting (Krackhardt 1990). Thus the motivation to *form* accurate perceptions of social networks may be an important, even deliberate, means by which initially low-power actors attempt to "reign-in structurally determined power processes" (Simpson et al. 2011, p. 166). The recent work of Galinsky and Simpson along with their colleagues reflects a more general trend in exchange and networks research from structural themes to more agentic ones in explanations of power and resource inequality and related phenomena. We discuss the broader significance of this trend in the following section.

Conclusion

The theories of power and resource inequality reviewed here are as varied and diverse as the sociologists who produce them. As with all theories in science, sociological theories of power and resource inequality are lenses through which to view the world. All theories systematically sharpen and focus in on certain phenomena while excluding others. Exchange theoretic accounts

focus on the interdependences that link dyadic encounters (Emerson 1972b) and the capacity for structures to produce exclusion (Willer 1999). Much of the theoretical and empirical activity in the exchange tradition over the past two decades has focused on precision; that is, the ability to predict exactly how much resource inequality will emerge in any given structure. That theories in this tradition are capable of predicting ratio-level outcomes, often with accuracy to within a few tenths of a point, is a testament to how far our knowledge of power and resource inequality has evolved since the founding fathers of the discipline began to think systematically about power and resource inequality (see Willer and Emanuelson 2008 for a test of ten distinct theories). The emphasis has been squarely on structure and resource differences that emerge over time, and the capacity to predict the latter from the former.

Symbolic accounts of power emphasize the micro aspects of power, negotiation, definition of the situation, and the interplay of social context and social interaction. Power is seen as a dynamic and ever-changing property that evolves in context and cannot be simply reduced to social structure. Despite some disagreement, we see a sort of consensus that has emerged in the past decades. With issues of astructural bias somewhat laid to rest, there has been movement from more idiosyncratic to more systematic accounts of power. Schwalbe et al. (2000), Hallet (2007) and their predecessor Luckenbill (1979) in particular seem to have struck a balance between the overly myopic "nothing is predicable" stance and the overly tolerant "it is simply a matter of structure" position. Power based on symbolic interaction has become increasingly understood in terms of the opportunities and constraints presented by context, institutional pressures, and other forces that set the stage for social interaction. In this sense, those who study the symbolic aspects of power have moved a bit closer to the intellectual traditions of exchange and rational choice theorists.

Other theorists focus on the positive phenomena that can sometimes emerge from power relations. There has been much agreement that certain exchange structures produce dynamics that bring people together around common tasks and activities (Lawler and Yoon 1996; Molm et al. 2006, 2007). This has been the case in both the exchange and symbolic interactionist approaches examined here. In the exchange tradition it has been long understood that high mutual dependence can produce interactions laden with positive emotions, and these emotions have the capacity to produce trust, cohesion, solidarity and commitment behavior. Power as such is construed as a positive force in social interaction. The finding that power and positive emotions can produce phenomena like solidarity or organizational commitment has been demonstrated in both laboratory experiments (Lawler et al. 2008; Lawler and Yoon 1996) and in the field (Yoon and Thye 2000). More recently, the emphasis in this arena has shifted from the link between power relations and commitment to other forms of social interaction. For instance, recent studies have asked how altering the basic forms of exchange affect the link between power and resource inequality (Lawlerv et al. 2008; Molm et al. 2003a, b). In examining variation across fundamental forms of exchange (i.e., negotiate, reciprocal productive, and generalized) studies in this tradition have become more "interactionist" in flavor.

Across the social psychological traditions we see many common themes and points of overlap. All social psychological accounts of power and resource inequality deal, at least implicitly, with the tension between *structure* and *agency*. This contrast is most evident in the symbolic account of power and resource inequality. For symbolic interactionists social structure has been conceptualized as institutional norms or pressures, contextual constraints on interaction, extant inequalities produced by institutions such as race and gender, and larger cultural ideology. Agency is the human capacity to define meanings and situations and to create and reproduce patterns of action and experiences through negotiated communication at the micro level (Musolf 1992). The primary issue has been to incorporate structure into theories that focus heavily on agency. For exchange and rational choice theorists, structures are presented in relational terms—as networks of opportunities and constraints that impact the pattern of social

interaction. Historically, exchange theories afford much less room for agency as structures are conceived as more predetermined and less fluid. Network structures are typically theorized as more static and less variable (see Willer and Willer 2000 for an exception that explores dynamic social networks). However, in contemporary work there is much more room for emotion, trust, risk management, and other perceptual and cognitive processes. In short, exchange theories have become more focused in recent years on the concept of human agency in structures (see Cook et al. 2009 for an example). This shift moves the concerns of exchange theorists much closer to those of symbolic interactionists and mirrors the SI trend that has moved, some would argue, from agency to structure. In this sense we see a sort of intellectual convergence taking place across these very diverse traditions.

In this chapter we, as most sociologists do, assume that power produces resource inequality. At the same time we note that the converse can sometimes occur (i.e., resource inequality may also produce power). At the macro-level, resource dependence theory suggests that organizations that control resources have a basis of power over those who are dependent on those resources (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). At the micro-level, reward expectations theory (Berger et al. 1985) suggests that those who possess high levels of rewards are expected to be more competent, and thus have more power and influence. Surprisingly, there has been very little social psychological work on the manner in which resources *produce* power, despite the old adage, "You gotta have money to make money." In the future we suggest that investigators may examine more carefully the link from resource inequality to power. Borrowing from resource dependence theory, we hypothesize that resource inequality may impact power through levels of dependence. Consider the difference between a resource rich boat owner and a resource poor boat owner. One can image that a rich captain may need to sell the boat less than a poor one. In this sense, having access to resources may reduce dependence and increase power in the parlance of exchange theory. Framed somewhat differently, having access to resources may allow the former boat owner to better define the situation and frame meanings in the context of the negotiations. Thus, the symbolic aspects of the interaction may also be affected by the level of held resources. Both hypotheses deserve future investigation.

We began this chapter by pointing out that one of the first roadblocks we encountered was how to define "power" and "resource inequality." As our work on the chapter unfolded, the larger roadblock we encountered was to see the various social psychological perspectives on power and resource inequality in a fresh light—to see the larger unifying picture reflected in what appeared to be very diverse perspectives at first blush. Indeed, research on power and resource inequality within social psychology can itself be conceived in terms of the various perspectives and theories we use to study these central topics. If scientists in these traditions continue to "take the role" of other perspectives, this will surely accelerate the erosion of intellectual divides and increase a sense of mutual dependence. To illustrate, structural theories of network power (e.g., power dependence theory, elementary theory, the status value theory of power) emphasize the importance of how people perceive the value of goods to be exchanged. Symbolic interactionists focus precisely on how powerful individuals control the definition of value in social relations. And while there is little or no cross-fertilization across these areas, there should be. Besides making for a more pleasant and sociable experience at the annual meetings, multi-perspective approaches to power and resource inequality and other kinds of integrative efforts will undoubtedly pay great dividends when it comes to advancing social psychological theory, methods, and application.

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