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THE DEVELOPMENT OF PERCEPTIONS AND BEHAVIOR IN NEWLY FORMED SOCIAL POWER RELATIONSHIPS

GEORGE L. LEVINGER

Empirical investigations of social power have been concerned for the most part with the description of power structures and with the sociological or psychological correlates of social power at some given point in time (6, 9, 10, Chapter 2). Attention has been directed more toward persisting characteristics than toward changes. While this work has provided considerable understanding of the distribution of power and its consequences within different kinds of groups, relatively little is known about the ways in which power relations build up and maintain themselves or suffer modifications.

The present research deals with two questions concerning the development of power relations among members of informal groups: To what extent do different kinds of interpersonal information affect a group member’s power perceptions? What is the relation between his perception of other members and his behavior toward them? Before phrasing these questions as specific hypotheses relevant to a particular behavioral setting, let us consider the concepts to be used.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

By social power we shall mean an individual’s potentiality for influencing one or more other persons toward acting or changing in a given direction. According to this definition, social power is the ability to exert interpersonal influence. What, then, is the basis of interpersonal influence? Such influence is established by inducing other persons to perceive that acceptance or rejection of a given influence attempt will lead either to satisfying or depriving experiences for them. In other words, interpersonal influence implies the manipulation of valences in another person’s psychological environment.

This report is based on a doctor’s dissertation submitted to the Doctoral Program in Social Psychology at the University of Michigan. I am grateful to Dr. Ronald Lippitt for his valuable help as chairman of the doctoral committee. I am also indebted to Drs. Dorwin Cartwright and Sidney Rosen for their constructive suggestions.

The research was supported in part under grant-in-aid (M-450 (C-2) ) from the National Institute of Mental Health of the Public Health Service.
In formally structured groups, the basis of such influence is grounded in the established rules of organization. In informal groups, however, the members' differing abilities to influence one another arise out of their continuing interaction. In a newly formed group of relative strangers the prospective member has no rank or status. In such a setting he brings with him merely his individual properties such as his personal characteristics; his knowledge, information, and skills; his material possessions; and his social-emotional capacities. If the prospective member's properties are relevant to the needs of other group members, these properties may become resources which he can use in his dealings with them. He can satisfy or deprive other members to the degree that his intrapersonal properties are convertible into interpersonal resources.

The concept "resource" requires definition. A resource is any property of an individual which he makes available to persons in his environment as a means for their positive or negative need-satisfaction. This concept refers to the actualization of properties for interpersonal consumption—a consumption which may have either positive or negative utility for the consumer. In other words, a resource refers to some definite act, past or present, which has the effect of either facilitating or hindering the locomotion of other persons or the group as a whole.2

One other concept is important for this research. Let us use the term "resource potential" to mean those properties of the individual which are perceived by other members of the group as relevant to their goalward locomotion, but which have not as yet been demonstrated by his behavior. Thus, resource potential refers to properties which are convertible into resources at some future time.

It is proposed here that in an informal group the bases of a member's power lie in his capacity for making available and for withholding resources which are important for the need-satisfaction of other members. This proposition derives from the assumption of an underlying exchange process by which group members attain satisfaction and avoid deprivation of their needs. The more a member is perceived as controlling resources which will satisfy or deprive others' needs, the more he will be able to influence other persons' behavior. His power in the group will be enhanced particularly when his resources have relevance for furthering the group's progress toward its goal.

In order that an individual's power may become established in a group

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2 The concepts "resource" and "property" also have been used by Bales (2) in his theoretical discussion of group interaction. However, Bales does not distinguish between these terms and uses them in a less general sense.
setting, then, other group members must perceive his ability to make available and to withhold resources. This may occur through their receiving information about his potential resources or through their seeing a behavioral demonstration of his actual resources.

During the establishment of a group, how do group members come to relate to one another in terms of resources? If we consider the hypothetical individual as he enters a new group, we may assume the following process. As he begins his contact with other members he receives some initial information about them, which leads him to form his first perceptions of his relationship with them. These perceptions will determine his first action toward the others, and this action is likely to modify their perceptions of him. Their behavior in turn will be shaped according to their modified perceptions and will probably induce a readjustment in the individual's initial perceptions. In short, it is conceived that interpersonal perceptions and behavior develop as the products of the circular process of interaction, and that the individual continually generates and is fed back information concerning his own and others' social resources.

The feedback process outlined here has implications for the growth of interpersonal relations in the group. It would appear that information fed into the circuit may lead to effects which will persist much longer than the immediate instant. If such information affects the recipient's actions, it is likely to alter the consequent perceptions and behavior of the other members and thus may have an observable impact on the pattern of interaction. It is evident that not all information will have such persisting effects. First, the saliency of such information will determine its ability to modify a relationship. The less its saliency for a given dimension of social interaction, the less it will affect the relationship. Second, the consistency of the information with other available information will affect its impact. The more it is contradicted by other relevant information, the less will be its effect. Third, its priority over later information is important. During the stages of group development, the later that information is introduced, the less will be its effect.

The present study was influenced by the above theoretical considerations. We were confronted with a choice among the many possible determinants of power in developing social relationships. It seemed worth while to consider the effects of information concerning both actual and potential resources. The following two determinants were chosen: (1) the initial information concerning the individual's resource potential relative to others in the group, (2) the information received during the group's interaction concerning the relative amount of actual resources of the members. Five hypotheses were stated.
Hypothesis 1. The individual’s perceptions of the magnitude of his power will be positively associated with the favorableness of the initial information concerning his relative resource potential in the group.

This hypothesis is derived from the assertions that power is founded on resources and that relevant information will have a persistent impact over the course of the group’s interaction.

Hypothesis 2. The individual’s perceptions of the magnitude of his power will be positively associated with the relative amount of the resources he demonstrates in comparison with others during the group’s interaction.

This hypothesis has the same derivation as Hypothesis 1. Also, there should be a far stronger effect on the individual’s perceptions from the information about actual than about potential resources.

Hypothesis 3. Changes in the amount of the individual’s power-relevant behavior will vary positively with changes in his perception of the magnitude of his power.

Studies by Lippitt, Polansky, Redl, and Rosen (9) and by French and Snyder (see Chapter 8) have demonstrated in field settings that a person’s social power is positively related to the success, the frequency, and the directiveness of his attempts to influence other persons. This hypothesis states that a person’s power perception and power-relevant behavior—e.g., number of influence attempts—are sufficiently interdependent that when one is changed the other also is changed.

Hypothesis 4. The individual’s power-relevant behavior will be positively associated with the favorableness of the initial information concerning his relative resource potential in the group.

Hypothesis 4 is derivable from Hypotheses 1 and 3. If the initial information has measurable effects on perception, it ought to have similar effects on behavior.

Hypothesis 5. Changes in the individual’s perception of his power during the first half will exceed those during the second half of the interaction period.

Although there are likely to be continual readjustments in an individual’s perceptions during social interaction, if the situation remains relatively stable these readjustments will tend to become progressively less. This hypothesis is in accordance with statements by Asch (1) and Bruner (3) that early impressions or early hypotheses tend to become resistant to change.

Procedure

An experiment to test these hypotheses was designed in the following manner. The subjects were sixty-four male underclassmen at the University
of Michigan who participated as members of two-person groups. Each subject was paired with a paid participant in a series of twenty-four joint decision-making trials, during which the two partners were required to reach decisions concerning a number of city planning problems. The subject was led to perceive his partner as merely another subject, who had also volunteered to help the experimenter "develop a new version of a city planning aptitude test." In reality, the partner had been trained by the experimenter, his behavior was controlled, and each trial outcome was carefully prearranged. Subjects were assigned randomly to the various experimental conditions.

Instructions. The essence of the experimental instructions was as follows—for the full instructions see (8):

A national foundation, which had developed a test for city planning aptitude, has found that the test needs revision because in its original form it neglected social factors. The foundation has given a contract to the Research Center for Group Dynamics for building the missing social factors into the test. The two group members are helping therefore to standardize a task in which the following three factors are important: "the knack of knowing where good building sites are; the ability to maintain effective discussions with other persons; and the accuracy for understanding one's relationship with other persons."

The two partners were told that they would be presented the plans of twenty-four different small towns, one after another. In each instance they would choose the "best building site" from among three possible sites for some given construction such as a school, a fire station, or a supermarket. They were informed that in each case they would have fifteen seconds to look at the town, to indicate their preferred site on a slip of paper, and to pass the slip to the experimenter. This was "to indicate their aptitude for choosing good sites." Then they would have one-and-a-half minutes to discuss their choice with their partner and to come to a joint decision (failure to agree on a common site would penalize the group score). This part of the task was "to indicate their ability to maintain effective discussions." Finally, before each new trial, each person would estimate his relative influence as a group member and indicate this as a percentage (from 0 per cent to 100 per cent) on a slip of paper. This was "to indicate their accuracy for understanding their relationship with the other person."

Manipulations. The manipulation of the independent variables was accomplished in the following manner. The first manipulation involved differences in subjects' initial information about their partners. Half the subjects received indications that the partner had somewhat less experience relevant
to the task than they (Superior information) and the other half that he had more experience (Inferior information). That is, after the instructions, and before the start of the task, the experimenter questioned the subject and the partner concerning their college major, their acquaintance with city planning, their performance in social studies and art in high school, and their degree of confidence about doing well at this task. The subject always replied first. Where the subject was made to feel “superior,” the partner said he was majoring in English, that he had never even heard of city planning before, that he had been uninterested in social studies and had done poorly at art, and that he had little confidence. In the “inferior” variation, the partner said he was majoring in architecture, that in one course he had taken up city planning for several weeks, that he had done well in social studies and art, and that he was pretty confident about this task.

The second manipulation involved two different behavior patterns on the part of the partner, the “Accept” and the “Reject” patterns. It was arranged in both patterns that during the twenty-four trials the partner would agree in his initial choice of site exactly eight times. As for the remaining sixteen initial disagreements, in the Accept pattern the partner would bow to the subject on fourteen trials; whereas in the Reject pattern he would find suitable arguments for maintaining his initial choice in the same fourteen trials, so that on such trials the subject either had to concede or he had to disagree at the end of the minute-and-a-half. Thus for any given trial there were four possible outcomes: Agree, Bow, Concede, and Disagree. In the Accept pattern there were always 8 Agrees, 14 Bows, and 2 Concedes. In the Reject pattern there were always 8 Agrees, 2 Bows, and some combination of 14 Concedes and Disagrees.

In order to determine the adequacy of the second experimental manipulation, a check was made of the partner’s behavior. It was found that within either the Accept or the Reject condition there were no significant differences in his behavior toward the subjects. However, between these two conditions, he made more influence attempts and he was more assertive toward subjects in the Reject condition ($p < .001$). Thus, except for the intentional difference between the Accept and Reject conditions, it appears that the partner’s behavior was satisfactorily controlled.³

³ In addition to the two experimental manipulations reported here, a third manipulation was introduced which will not be treated in this report. At the halfway mark, between the twelfth and thirteenth trials, subjects were given differential information about their previous performance. Some subjects were informed they had done very
Measures. The dependent variables were the subjects' perceptions of own power and their behavior during the course of the interaction period. The former was indicated by the twenty-five estimates of their relative influence, which subjects reported before each trial and after the last one in the series.

Three separate indices were used for describing the subjects' power-relevant behavior: (1) influence attempts—the number of attempts the subject made to influence his partner to his own point of view; (2) resistances—the number of times he refused to concede when his partner maintained until the end his initial choice of site; (3) assertiveness—the degree of confidence he expressed when he spoke to his partner about his choice of site. In reliability checks, it was found that "number of influence attempts" was coded with an average $r$ of .84, and "assertiveness" had an average $r$ of .72. The index of resistance had perfect reliability, since it was always clear whether the subject had conceded or retained his initial position at the end of a trial. These reliabilities were considered sufficiently high to justify the use of a single observer for the behavior coding. Correlations among these three behavioral indices ranged from .60 to .62 ($p<.01$).

Of the sixty-four subjects, sixteen were exposed to the Accept pattern and forty-eight to the Reject pattern. In each pattern, half the subjects received Superior information initially and the other half Inferior information.

Because of the difference between the partner's behavior toward the Accept subjects and the Reject subjects as mentioned above, it was found that these two groups differed significantly in their experimental experience. According to responses on a post-experimental questionnaire, Accept subjects tended to see their partners as "yielding" and "unsure of himself," whereas the Reject subjects perceived their partners as "resistant" and "strong." On the basis of these differences, one would be disposed to test a number of hypotheses separately for the two groups. Yet for demonstrating statistical significance, the number of Accept subjects is too small for making comparisons within that group. Therefore, while Hypotheses 2 and 5 are tested by the data on all sixty-four subjects, the results concerning Hypotheses 1, 3, and 4 are confined to the data from the forty-eight Reject subjects.

well, others that they had done very poorly, and still others were told nothing about their performance.

This third manipulation had no essential effect on the results to be reported here. The effects of this third manipulation were briefly as follows: The half-time information significantly influenced subject's perceptions of their power. It also had a similar effect on their behavior, but not when it was contradicted by the partner's behavior (second manipulation).
Results

Figure 1 illustrates the contrasting effects of the two experimental manipulations on the subjects' perceptions of their power during the course of the interaction period. Both the variation in the initial information and in the partner's behavior exerted noticeable effects on these perceptions, but the Accept-Reject variation had clearly the greater influence.

Hypothesis 1. Table 1 shows that the initial information had a significant effect on subjects' perceptions of their relative power. Those subjects who were given to understand that their potentiality was superior estimated their power as higher than did those who heard it was inferior. Although the differential effects of the initial information tended to diminish over time (cf. Figure 1), these effects were still present to some degree at the end of the period.

All p-values refer to one-tailed tests of significance, since the direction of the expected relationships was specified in the hypotheses.

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Figure 1. Effects of Initial Information and Partner's Behavior on Subjects' Perceptions of Their Relative Power * (64 Subjects)

* The fourteen arrows pointing up for the Accept and down for the Reject condition, refer to those trials where the partner's prearranged acceptances or rejections occurred. Two other arrows, for each condition, indicate where the partner reversed his predominant behavior.
Table 1

Effects of Initial Superior and Inferior Information on Subjects' Average Perceived Relative Power (48 Reject Subjects)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Information</th>
<th>Hi</th>
<th>Med Hi</th>
<th>Med Lo</th>
<th>Lo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superior</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inferior</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$Chi^2 = 8.69; \ p < .02$

Hypothesis 2. Table 2 indicates that the two variations in the partner's behavior had strikingly different effects. All sixteen subjects whose partners demonstrated much acceptance of their ideas and suggestions developed perceptions that their power was greater than their partners'. On the other hand, those subjects whose partners showed much initiative and resisted their contributions developed perceptions that their power was less than their partners'.

Hypothesis 3. It was found in this study that subjects' perceived relative power correlated .55 with their number of influence attempts, .48 with their number of resistances, and .51 with their degree of assertiveness—all significant beyond the .01 level of confidence. These correlations between perceived power and indices of behavioral power corroborate findings by earlier investigators (9). However, in order to test Hypothesis 3, we need to compare subjects' changes in perceptions with their changes in behavior from one time to another. We must ask the question, Do perceptions and behavior show corresponding shifts from one part of the period to another?

Table 3 shows some of the data concerning subjects' changes in their perceptions and behavior from the second to the fourth quarter of the experi-

Table 2

Effects of Partner's Accept or Reject Behavior on Subjects' Perceptions of Relative Power (64 Subjects)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner's Behavior</th>
<th>Subject's Perceived Power (at end of task)</th>
<th>Greater than Partner</th>
<th>Equal to Partner</th>
<th>Less than Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accept</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reject</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$Chi^2 = 54.51; \ p < .001$
Table 3

Relation Between Changes in Perceived Power and Behavioral Power (Number of Influence Attempts Initiated) (48 Reject Subjects)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes in Number of Influence Attempts</th>
<th>Changes in Perceived Power (from 2nd to 4th quarter)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase (N = 17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase (N = 21)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Change (N = 6)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease (N = 21)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$Chi^2 = 8.91; \ p < .035$

mental period. It is evident that there was a correspondence in direction between subjects’ changes in their perceived power and their number of influence attempts from one part to another part of the period, at beyond the .035 level of confidence. This finding was even stronger for the other two indices of behavioral power. Changes in number of resistances were associated with perceptual changes at the .025 level ($Chi^2 = 10.12; d.f. = 4$); and changes in subjects’ assertiveness were related at the .001 level ($Chi^2 = 20.06; d.f. = 4$).

The results for this hypothesis demonstrate that, comparing succeeding twelve-minute time units, over a continuous period of interaction there was a definite correspondence between persons’ readjustments in their interpersonal perceptions and their interpersonal behavior.

The feedback orientation toward the process of social interaction also led to the examination of the more microscopic fluctuations of perceptions and behavior from one trial to the next. It was possible to break into the circuit and to look at the immediate effects of perceptual changes upon the immediately following behavioral changes between any given pair of successive trials, or look at the parallel effects of behavioral on perceptual changes. In this analysis it was found, contrary to expectation, that trial-to-trial changes in perceived power did not significantly determine parallel trial-to-trial changes in number of influence attempts or degree of assertiveness. On the other hand, trial-to-trial fluctuations in such behavior were reflected significantly ($p < .01$) in subjects’ immediately following estimates of their perceived power. This finding seems to indicate that subjects’ periodic estimates of their perceived power responded rather sensitively to their own im-

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5 It should be noted that the second and fourth quarters were identical with respect to the partner’s behavior pattern. The first and third quarters were not used for the analysis, because of the probable confounding by the impact of the experimental information.
Table 4

effects of initial information on power-relevant behavior (number of influence attempts initiated) (48 reject subjects)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Information</th>
<th>Number of Influence Attempts Initiated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inferior</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 7.33; \ p < .035 \]

Immediately previous performance; while, on the other hand, their behavior was affected mostly by a fairly global perceptual restructuring of the situation and by the particular impact of each social episode.

Hypothesis 4. All three indices of subjects’ power relevant behavior were significantly affected by the initial manipulation concerning the relative expertness of the partner. Table 4 gives the data regarding subjects’ number of influence attempts initiated toward their partners, showing that the initial information about the partners’ relative resource potential was an effective determinant of this kind of behavior. The other two indices were similarly affected: number of resistances \( \chi^2 = 7.19 \) and degree of assertiveness \( \chi^2 = 7.33 \) both at the .035 level of confidence with three degrees of freedom.

Hypothesis 5. We may observe in Table 5 that, in accordance with this hypothesis, there was a significant decrease from the early to the late stages in subjects’ trial-to-trial changes in their estimates of their relative power. This finding confirms that the experimental task provided a rather constant situation for the subjects. Thus, the more they became acquainted with their partners, the less they found it necessary to make revisions in their perceptions of the relationship.

In this experimental setting, one member of the pair was a trained participant whose behavior was influenced rather little by the subject’s actions. Outside this laboratory situation, a stable relationship would probably be reached

Table 5

mean number of changes in subjects’ perceived relative power

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Difference Between Means</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>( p )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Half</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Half</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
sooner and to a greater degree. In that case, both partners would be sensitive to the social feedback and mutually would govern their behavior in order to reinforce the relationship. On the other hand, such increasing stability in social perceptions over time probably is limited to settings where a minimum of new information is introduced into the interpersonal relationship.

DISCUSSION

It was found that both experimental manipulations were significant determinants of the interaction throughout the session. Even the information introduced at the very start still had a measurable effect on the subjects at the end of the session.

It will be remembered that the first kind of information was provided by the experimental partner, who varied the amount of task-relevant properties which he attributed to himself. This initial information was given to the subject before he had any behavioral contact with his partner.

The literature on social perception abounds with studies treating of the formation of impressions concerning other people—see the review by Bruner and Tagiuri (4). All but one of these studies, however, have been confined to the impressions that individuals form after having had contact only with photographs or with verbal descriptions of other people. The one published study directed at the formation of impressions during personal contact is that by Kelley (7). Kelley informed half of his subjects that the instructor they were to meet was "warm," and the other half that he was "cold." After listening to a lecture by this instructor the two groups of subjects differed considerably in their impression of him.

The results of the present experiment give support to Kelley’s findings. These subjects had considerably more opportunity for interacting with the stimulus figure than did Kelley’s subjects. Even so, we find that the initial information exerted a persisting effect upon their structuring of the relationship, despite the objectively identical behavior of their partner.

However, Kelley’s findings also must be qualified in an important respect. The effects of the initial information were small when compared to the effects of the second kind of information which the subject received. Regardless of whether the subject initially received "superior" or "inferior" information, the actual behavior of his partner became more important for determining his perceptions. Depending on whether his partner accepted or rejected his ideas, the average subject’s perceptions of his power moved steadily up or down. In terms of our earlier discussion concerning potential versus actual resources,
we may consider that the first type of information referred to the group member's comparative potential resources, whereas the second type of information gave comparative evidence about the member's actual resources. The continuous and recurring feedback of the second type of information was certainly effective in overriding the impact of the first type.

Let us now turn to the correspondence between the perceptual and the behavioral indices of the subjects' social power. Beyond the confirmation of findings in previous field studies (5, 9, 10) of the correlation between average perceived power and average behavioral output, it was demonstrated that shifts in subjects' power perceptions were related to corresponding shifts in their power-relevant behavior. This finding lends support to a general feedback assumption concerning the mutual modification and readjustment of perception and behavior during the process of social interaction.

One point of possible theoretical significance concerns the marked intercorrelations among the three behavioral indices of power. Number of influence attempts, number of resistances, and degree of assertiveness toward the partner correlated with one another in the .60's. Whereas previous studies have pointed to the positive relation between the initiation of influence attempts and the initiator's directiveness, the present indication that resistances also may betoken power warrants some comment. The explanation is simple. Usually, power is defined in terms of ability to get others to do things. This experimental setting, however, involved a somewhat competitive situation where power was measured on a relative basis. Thus, in order to enhance his own power, the individual to some extent had to resist the influence of his partner. It is probable that in situations which are less competitive, or which involve a larger number of possible areas of influence, the frequency of resistances would be a less important indicator of social power.

Finally, it was established that subjects' perceptual estimates of their power fluctuated more during the first than during the second half of the experimental session. This result is in accordance with those of other studies of social perception, notably those of Asch (1); and it is explained in terms of Bruner's assertion (3) that an individual's hypotheses become more resistant to revision the longer they are held. This finding implies that as a power relationship develops over a period of time—in an otherwise stable setting—it requires a progressively stronger input of contradictory information in order to revise the growing perceptions of the persons involved.

There may be certain methodological implications to be drawn from this study. In examining the interaction in two-person groups, the effects of subjects' exposure to various manipulations were compared by controlling the
other half of the interaction pattern. This procedure of the "controlled interaction sequence" was similar to many other experiments in group dynamics (see 5). However, a further aspect of the procedure was the "breaking into the feedback circuit," through the frequent sequential measurements of the subjects' ongoing perceptions, in a fashion similar to the measures obtained in the research on level of aspiration.

This sort of technique for measuring interaction sequentially over time has possible limitations, though it may open some new paths of research. In this study, for example, it is likely that this measure made subjects perceive the power dimension more saliently than would normally have been the case. Also, it may have increased subjects' feelings of competitiveness. In this writer's opinion, these effects were not very strong, but their possible presence should be recognized in interpreting the data.

The advantages of the technique are that it makes it possible to do microscopic studies of group development. With respect to social power, one can study experimentally the changes in persons' power perceptions and behavior when transferring from one situation to another. The technique appears applicable to more controlled studies of interpersonal "schismogenesis": How do interpersonal cleavages originate? how rapidly? via what kinds of information? and in what sorts of situations? Finally, one might examine the differential predictions of the "continuity" and the "discontinuity" theories of learning in the context of human social situations: What change in social learning and behavior is the product of continuous, minor revisions in perceptions? And what change is the result of apparently discontinuous restructurings of the perceptions?

Summary

This study was initiated in order to investigate a person's perceptions and behavior during the development of his power relationship with another person. A theory was outlined proposing that the individual's social power in informal groups is based largely on his ability to actualize important resources. Thus it was stated that the development of perceptions concerning the power of different group members is dependent upon the demonstration of their respective abilities to make available or to withhold resources relevant to the group's functioning.

A number of hypotheses were stated in consequence of this formulation: First, the individual's perceptions of his power will be positively associated with his initial information concerning his relative potential resources, received before the start of the interaction period. Second, these perceptions will
be positively associated with the relative amount of resources he demonstrates in comparison with others during the period itself. Third, changes in the amount of the individual’s power-relevant behavior—i.e., influence attempts, resistances, and assertiveness—will vary directly with changes in his perceptions of the magnitude of his power. Fourth, the individual’s power-relevant behavior will be positively associated with the initial information. Fifth, changes in his perceptions of his power during the first half will exceed those during the second half of the interaction period.

A laboratory experiment was conducted to test the hypotheses. Sixty-four subjects, each paired with a trained experimental assistant, participated in a series of twenty-four joint decision-making trials. The partners were required to reach decisions regarding a number of city planning problems, ostensibly in order to help develop a new version of a city planning aptitude test. Since the behavior of the assistant was carefully prearranged, the outcomes of the trials were controlled. Data were gathered for comparing the changes in the subjects’ perceptions and behavior over the entire length of the experimental session. The subjects’ estimates of their relative power were obtained before and after each of the trials, and their behavior during each trial was systematically observed. Thus, it became possible to trace the various fluctuations in the subjects’ perceptions and in their behavior.

The experimental manipulations consisted of variations in the information which subjects received initially about the partner’s probable task ability, and in the degree of acceptance or rejection the partner gave to their ideas during the behavioral sequence.

The hypotheses received substantial support. Each of the manipulations of information concerning the two partners’ relative resources exerted a significant effect on subjects’ perceptions. Nevertheless, although the initial information concerning potential resources was a significant determinant of power perceptions, the continuing feedback of the partner’s actual behavior acted as a much more important determinant. In this experimental situation, where it was possible to test the accuracy of information about potential resources by learning about actual resources, the partner’s visible behavior provided the most important information for the subjects’ periodic estimates. Further, it was found that there was a clear correspondence between changes in subjects’ perceptions of their power and changes in their accompanying social influence behavior. Finally it was shown that there was a significant decrease in changes of subjects’ perceptions of their power from the first to the second half of the interaction period.
REFERENCES