CHAPTER 15

POWER AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE IN RELATIONSHIPS

Jeffry A. Simpson, Allison K. Farrell, M. Minda Oriña, and Alexander J. Rothman

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> The fundamental concept in social science is power, in the same sense in which energy is the fundamental concept in physics.. . . The laws of social dynamics are laws which can only be stated in terms of power. (Russell, 1938)

As the philosopher Bertrand Russell observed, power plays a central role in everyday social interactions, and it serves as an organizing principle in the social and behavioral sciences (Reis, Collins, & Berscheid, 2000). Given its paramount importance, one might expect power would hold a privileged place in the field of social psychology and particularly in the study of relationships. Although there are major theoretical statements on what power is (e.g., French & Raven, 1959; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) and how it should affect relationship dynamics (e.g., Huston, 1983), and there are isolated pockets of research on how power influences interpersonal outcomes (see the References), power has never been a hotbed of theoretical or empirical activity. One overarching goal of this chapter is to begin to change this state of affairs.

There are several reasons why power has not become a central, organizing construct within either social psychology or the field of interpersonal relationships. First, the construct of power has multiple components, making it challenging to define and measure. This, in turn, has made it difficult to interpret the effects that the amount of power wielded by each partner has on important relationship or individual outcomes. Second, most prior studies of power in relationships have been descriptive and have relied on global assessments of power (e.g., "In general, how much power or influence do you have over your partner?"). Partners in established relationships, however, often have and may exert different amounts of power in different decision-making domains (e.g., financial, sexual, future plans), and global conceptualizations and measures of power do not assess—and often may not predict—domain-specific areas of power in relationships, especially in close and committed relationships. In addition, the degree to which people are accurately aware of the power dynamics in their relationships remains unclear. Overreliance on self-report measures may have masked some of the actual processes of power and influence in many relationships. Despite these challenges, understanding power and the influence strategies and tactics that individuals use to get what they want from their relationship partners is essential to understanding a host of important relationship dynamics and outcomes (Reis et al., 2000).

Although power can be (and has been) defined in different ways, we provisionally define power as the ability of one individual in a relationship (the influence agent) to exert influence on another person (the target of influence) so that the influence agent obtains the specific outcomes he or she wants in a given situation while being able to resist influence attempts by the target. We define influence strategies as the higher level goals and interpersonal approaches that influence agents use to try to

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persuade targets. Most influence strategies exist along two dimensions: directness (direct vs. indirect) and valence (positive vs. negative). Direct strategies entail overt, visible, and unambiguous attempts to influence another person, whereas indirect strategies involve more covert, less visible, and more subtle forms of influence. Positive strategies entail the use of promises or rewards to engender influence, whereas negative strategies often focus on the use of threats or punishments. These two dimensions, which are fairly orthogonal, result in four basic types of influence: direct–positive, direct–negative, indirect–positive, or indirect–negative approaches (Overall, Fletcher, Simpson, & Sibley, 2009). Influence strategies are conveyed via the use of coordinated sets of influence tactics (e.g., coercion, autocracy, reasoning, manipulation), which are chosen and used to help achieve the influence agent's higher level goals or objectives. As a result, the use and effectiveness of different influence strategies and tactics ought to depend on the type and amount of power that an influence agent holds over a potential target of influence, such as his or her current romantic partner, as well as the target of influence's type and amount of power. As we discuss later, however, the amount of power that an individual holds in relation to his or her partner in a given domain (e.g., financial decision making, household duties) should also affect how both partners think, feel, behave, and attempt to influence each other during their daily interactions. Power differences and the use of specific influence strategies and tactics should also have an impact on short-term and long-term relationship outcomes, ranging from relationship satisfaction and commitment to relationship stability across time. In addition, power differences may affect the cognitive, behavioral, and emotional tendencies of one or both partners within a relationship. As we show, without knowing which relationship partner holds what kind or amount of power in certain decision-making areas, it may be difficult to understand and predict the actions of either partner and the ultimate trajectory of their relationship.

Our chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, we review six major theoretical perspectives on power: social power theory (French & Raven, 1959), resource theory (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Wolfe, 1959), interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), dyadic power theory (Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005; Rollins & Bahr, 1976), power within relationships theory (Huston, 1983), and power-approach theory (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003). While doing so, we discuss each theoretical perspective with respect to five key questions concerning the nature of power and influence in relationships.

In the second section, we review the empirical literature on power and influence, focusing primarily on the use, expression, and consequences of power in close (usually romantic) relationships. We discuss how power and influence have traditionally been measured, how power affects what partners think, feel, and do in different relationship settings, how power is linked to the use of different influence strategies and tactics, and how it relates to gender and being the weak-link (less dependent) partner in a relationship.

In the third section, we present a dyadic model of power and social influence in relationships that incorporates and builds on some of the core principles contained in the six major theoretical perspectives. This model, termed the *dyadic power–social influence model,* specifies how the characteristics of each relationship partner are linked to the type and amount of power that each partner is able to use in the relationship, the influence strategies and tactics that each partner can use, and some of the personal and relational outcomes that are likely to be experienced by each partner as a result of power and influence.

In the final section, we describe a stage model of how power is likely to operate in relationships across time as they develop, grow, and change. We also discuss promising directions for future research on power and influence in relationships, highlighting what makes the study of power particularly challenging to conduct in the context of established relationships.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Theoretical perspectives from social psychology, communication studies, and family science have all

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informed research on power and the use of influence strategies and tactics within relationships. In this first section, we review the six most influential theories of power and influence, both from within and outside the relationship literature. Although these theories vary in which components of power and influence they emphasize, they tend to include related constructs and construe power in fairly similar ways. To clarify how each theoretical perspective complements or contrasts with the others, we have identified five dimensions on which these theories can be compared and contrasted. The following five questions provide an organizing framework for this analysis (see Table 15.1):

1. *What is power?* How does each theory define power? Is power merely the potential to influence others, or does it require intentional action?
2. *Is power dyadic?* Does the conceptualization of power consider the relative degree of power between partners in a relationship?
3. *What are the primary sources of power?* Where does power in relationships come from? Which factors or domains matter the most in determining which partner has greater power within a relationship?
4. *How is power expressed or communicated?* How is power expressed or conveyed during interactions between relationship partners? What specific influence strategies or tactics are displayed?
5. *How does power affect basic relationship outcomes?* How does the power dynamic between partners in a relationship affect both each partner individually (e.g., his or her thoughts, emotions, self-esteem) and also the relationship (e.g., its level of commitment, satisfaction, stability) over time?

Social Power Theory

One of the first major theories of power was proposed by French and Raven (1959). According to their social power theory, power is defined as the potential to exert influence on another person, whether it be a stranger, a casual acquaintance, a coworker, a friend, or a romantic partner. Social influence, in turn, is the process through which social power is wielded in interpersonal contexts via the use of different influence strategies and their underlying tactics. Social influence occurs when the presence (either actual or implied) or the actions of one person (the influence agent) produce a change in the beliefs, attitudes, or behavior of another person (the target of influence).

The most important contribution of French and Raven's (1959) theory was the specification of six major bases (sources) of power. Each power base is believed to be associated with the use of different influence strategies and tactics, each of which in turn has unique effects on the targets of influence. Reward power stems from a target's perception that an influence agent has the ability to provide him or her with tangible or intangible objects that the target wants if the target adopts certain beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors the agent desires. This base of power, which tends to be associated with the use of positive reinforcement, is frequently used by parents when they try to cajole their children to engage in desired behaviors (e.g., sitting quietly through a concert) with the promise of an eventual reward (e.g., getting ice cream once it is over). Coercive power exists when a target perceives an agent has the ability to punish him or her for either doing something the agent does not like or not doing something the agent wants. Parents often use this base of power to control undesirable, aversive, or dangerous behaviors with threats of punishment. Reward and coercive power are basic sources of power because they do not require targets to have much understanding of the social norms, relationship status, or information or expertise about a topic to be effective.

The four other bases (sources) of power require greater social understanding and awareness to operate effectively. Legitimate power occurs when the target perceives that an influence agent has the right to affect the target, who then must comply with the agent's request. This type of power is witnessed when one person (a more powerful agent) holds a socially sanctioned role or position that another person (a less powerful target) acknowledges and respects, such as when a boss interacts with an employee about completing a new task. Referent power occurs when a target identifies with (i.e., wants to emulate) an influence agent, who is someone he or she admires greatly. This base of

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TABLE 15.1

Major Power Theories

Theory	What is power?	Is power dyadic?	What are the sources or bases of power?	How is power expressed or communicated in interactions?	What are the outcomes of (not) having power?
Social power theory (French & Raven, 1959)	The potential for influence	No	Reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, expert, informational	Through influence processes	—
Resource theory (Blood & Wolfe, 1960)	The ability (potential or actual) of an individual to change the behavior of other members in the social system	Yes; theory considers relative access to resources between partners	Relative access to important or valued resources	—	—
Interdependence theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959)	The ability of one person to directly influence the quality of outcomes of another person	Yes; theory considers relative dependence between partners	Relative dependence, fate control, behavior control, expertise	Through power strategies that elevate one's own power and reduce others' power	The more powerful partner can dictate outcomes for both partners
Dyadic power theory (Rollins & Bahr, 1976)	The ability or potential to influence or control the behavior of another person	Yes; theory considers relative power, authority, and control between partners	Perceptions of relative resources and authority	Increased perceived power → increased control attempts → increased power	—
Power within relationships theory (Huston, 1983)	The ability to achieve one's goals by intentionally influencing the partner	Yes; theory considers the traits, relationship norms, and environment of both partners	Reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, expert, informational	Through intentional, deliberate influence tactics	The more powerful partner can dictate outcomes for both partners
Power-approach theory (Keltner et al., 2003)	An individual's relative capacity to modify others' internal states	Yes; theory considers relative access and desire for resources	Holding desired resources, being able to administer punishments	Through providing or withholding resources or administering punishments	Mood expression, threat sensitivity, automaticity of cognition, approach or inhibition, consistency or coherence of behavior

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power is often used in TV commercials in which young people are encouraged to buy a product so they will be like the admired celebrity who uses it. Expert power exists when a target perceives that an agent has the ability to provide him or her with special or unique knowledge that is valuable to the target. This type of power is evident when one person (the agent) has considerably more familiarity with a given topic, problem, or issue and the other person (the target) wants or needs to benefit from this expertise. Finally, informational power is evident when an agent has specific information that

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may be useful to a target but the target must cooperate with the agent to get it. This base of power is frequently seen in business settings in which one person (the agent) has special information that the other person (the target) needs to make a good decision.

In sum, social power theory identifies six fundamental bases (sources) of power, each of which should be linked to specific types of influence strategies, tactics, and interpersonal processes for both the agent and the target of influence (see Table 15.1). The theory, however, does not explain how these bases of power are activated en route to exerting influence in interpersonal contexts or how being a more powerful versus a less powerful agent or target of influence affects personal or relational outcomes. In addition, social power theory says little if anything about how power operates in established dyads, and it is fairly mute on the major outcomes of having versus not having power. This is because the theory tends to focus on individuals rather than individuals within relationships, and it was not designed to address the long-term outcomes and consequences of having versus not having power.

Resource Theory

Resource theory was introduced by Blood and Wolfe (1960) and later extended by Safilios-Rothschild (1976). Wolfe (1959) defined resources as "a property of one person which can be made available to others as instrumental to the satisfaction of their needs or the attainment of their goals" (p. 100), where skills, knowledge, money, and status are considered to be relevant resources. Safilios-Rothschild provided a more comprehensive typology of resources, including socioeconomic (e.g., money, prestige), affective (e.g., affection, love), expressive (e.g., understanding, social support), companionship (e.g., social, leisure), sexual, and service (e.g., housekeeping, childcare) resources. Each of these resources can be possessed to a greater or lesser extent by each relationship partner, and individuals may choose to share or withhold access to a given resource with their partners.

Blood and Wolfe (1960) defined power as an individual's ability—either potential or actual—to change the behavior of other members in his or her social system (see Table 15.1). Imbalances in exchanges of (or access to) resources are the primary sources of power. This consideration of the relative levels of resource access and exchange for both partners in a relationship makes resource theory more dyadic in nature than social power theory because one cannot determine the levels of power within a relationship without knowing the specific resources held by each partner (see Table 15.1). When the levels of resources between partners are imbalanced, the partner who has fewer resources becomes dependent on his or her partner for access to the resources that he or she desires to satisfy his or her needs and achieve important goals. This increased dependence produces less power within the relationship. However, if an individual's situation changes (e.g., he or she gains access to valued resources via something or someone other than his or her romantic partner, such as through family or a career), he or she should become more independent, and the power dynamics within the relationship should shift accordingly.

Determining balance in the exchange of resources, however, can be complicated. Unequal exchanges can be difficult to identify objectively. For example, how can one objectively measure the amount of affection exchanged by each partner? Furthermore, balance in exchanges of resources ought to be based on the value of each resource as well as the total amount exchanged. The value of resources varies depending on the degree to which each partner has access to resources and whether she or he can find other cost-effective ways to gain them. As a result, perceptions of the equality or balance of costs and benefits in exchanges within the relationship primarily determine its power dynamics.

Unlike social power theory, resource theory says little about how power in relationships is expressed (see Table 1). Blood and Wolfe suggested that having relatively less power should lead the more dependent partner to be more willing to accept unequal exchanges of resources in the relationship, which ought to maintain and perhaps increase power imbalances across time. However, Blood and

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Wolfe discussed no other avenues for acting on or conveying power. Resource theory also says nothing about the outcomes of power for individuals or the relationship across time.

To illustrate the central tenets of resource theory, imagine that Mary and Richard are involved in a romantic relationship. Mary has little access to money, but she is willing to give Richard a lot of affection and support, and she takes care of the house and family. In return, she expects Richard to support her financially, but she does not require him to return her deep love and affection. Richard is an attractive man, and he could find another romantic partner without much difficulty, but he stays with Mary because he receives so much love and support from her. Thus, Richard has more power in the relationship than Mary does; he probably obtains more tangible rewards in most of their exchanges, he typically sacrifices less, and Mary usually bends to his will to keep their relationship harmonious. However, if Mary suddenly has access to money outside the relationship (perhaps through an inheritance), she may begin to perceive the status quo as imbalanced and may begin to expect more from Richard in return for her resources, which could alter the power dynamics in their relationship.

In sum, resource theory defines power as an ability to change another person's behavior, which stems from imbalances in access to and exchanges of valued resources within a relationship. The theory is dyadic because it considers the degree to which both partners value, hold, and exchange resources with one another. However, resource theory primarily focuses on the sources and bases of power dynamics within relationships; it provides little guidance on how power is expressed or its long-term outcomes.

Interdependence Theory

Interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) was one of the first social psychological theories of power in dyads. Borrowing concepts from game theory, Thibaut and Kelley (1959) defined power as the ability of one partner in a relationship to directly influence the quality of outcomes (i.e., the amount of rewards vs. costs) that can be obtained by the other partner in a given situation. Individuals who have better alternatives to the current partner or relationship—those who have high comparison levels for alternatives—should typically have greater power within their relationship because they can get better (more rewarding) outcomes outside the relationship than their current partner can. Over time, people who have better alternatives are more likely to leave relationships unless their partners provide them with special or unique outcomes, such as extremely high levels of love and affection.

According to interdependence theory, three types of power can exist when relationship partners make joint decisions, such as deciding whether to do one of two possible activities (e.g., doing yard work vs. going to a movie). Fate control exists when one partner totally determines the outcomes of the other partner, regardless of what the other partner wants to do. For example, if Mary really wants to go see a movie and has fate control over Richard, Richard will most likely end up seeing the movie with her, regardless of his own personal preferences or desires. To the extent that Mary completely dictates the quality of Richard's outcomes across many different situations in their relationship (i.e., she exerts total dominance over him), she has greater fate control over Richard. Individuals who have fate control over others are free to use any of French and Raven's (1959) six bases of power to get what they want in relationships. In its extreme form, fate control is witnessed in abusive relationships in which one partner (the more powerful person) completely dictates what the other, less powerful partner says and does.

A second type of power is behavior control. If Mary can make it more rewarding for Richard to change his behavioral choices in response to what she wants to do, Mary has behavior control over Richard. For example, if Mary can make yard work especially fun and enticing and this leads Richard to choose working in the yard with her instead of going to a movie, she has behavior control over Richard. Individuals who exercise behavior control usually rely on what French and Raven (1959) termed reward power. Most happy, well-adjusted relationship partners rely on behavior control rather than fate control (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959).

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Moreover, in long-standing relationships, initial patterns of fate control often shift to behavior control as relationship partners learn more about one another and find ways to approach tasks to ensure that both partners enjoy doing them.

A third type of power is expertise, which comes from one partner' having specialized information or knowledge from which the other partner can benefit. This type of power is similar to French and Raven's (1959) expertise power. Individuals who have expertise can improve their partner's positive outcomes by increasing their partner's rewards or lowering their costs, as when a more knowledgeable partner provides advice or gives information that allows the less knowledgeable partner to complete a task more easily, more quickly, or better. Mary, for example, may have special knowledge and tips about how to complete certain onerous yard work tasks such as weeding the garden that she can share with Richard. These tips then allow Richard to complete the weeding much more quickly and with considerably less effort, allowing him to do other things later that afternoon.

Interdependence theory also proposes that relationship partners can enact different power strategies when interacting and making decisions. For example, an individual can increase his or her power within a relationship by increasing the quality of his or her own alternatives, such as by actively looking for a new partner or by enhancing the desirable features of opposite-sex friends who could eventually become romantic partners. An individual can also increase his or her power by decreasing the apparent quality of his or her partner's alternatives, such as by derogating, denigrating, or downplaying his or her partner's other possible options. Furthermore, an individual can elevate his or her power by improving his or her ability to reward the current partner by reducing his or her partner's perceived qualities, skills, or confidence or by improving the value of the rewards that he or she can uniquely offer to the partner. Finally, an individual can increase his or her power by devaluing what the partner can offer him or her or by concluding that the rewards the partner can provide are not really needed, reducing one's reliance on the partner.

The concept of power in interdependence theory is consistent with the principle of least interest (Waller & Hill, 1951). According to this view, the partner in a relationship who is least interested in continuing the relationship (i.e., the one who has better alternatives and less to lose if the relationship ended) should dictate important decisions made in the relationship, including whether the relationship continues or disbands. The less dependent partner is termed the weak-link partner, whereas the more dependent partner is the strong link. Weak-link partners usually wield greater power than strong-link partners in most relationships (Sprecher & Felmlee, 1997). More powerful partners are also less satisfied and committed to their relationships and believe they have relatively better alternative partners, which suggests how discrepancies in power may develop (Grauerholz, 1987; Lennon, Stewart, & Ledermann, 2013). As we will show, this concept is important because it represents a within-dyad measure of power that indexes how much power one partner has relative to the other within a given relationship.

In sum, as displayed in Table 15.1, interdependence theory directly addresses all five key questions about power. According to this theory, power is the ability of one person to directly influence the quality of outcomes that another person (the partner) experiences. Power is dyadic given the relative levels of dependence that each partner has on the other for good outcomes. The principle sources of power are fate control, behavior control, and expertise, and power is communicated through the use of different power strategies designed to increase one's own power or reduce the partner's power. However, interdependence theory does not address the personal and relational outcomes of power use other than to suggest that the more powerful partner in a relationship should typically dictate the outcomes for both partners.

Dyadic Power Theory

Dyadic power theory (DPT; Rollins & Bahr, 1976) incorporates core elements from several other relationship power theories, resulting in a dyadic model that depicts the primary bases and processes of power dynamics in married couples (see Figure 15.1).

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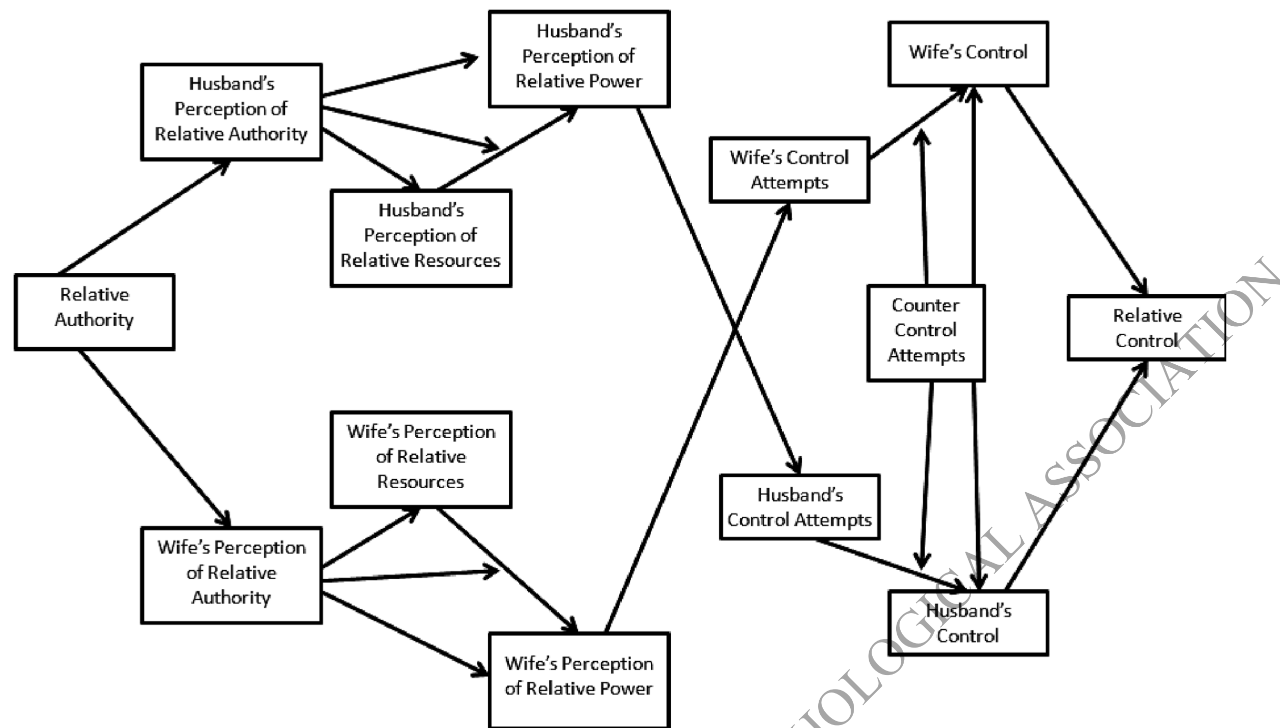

FIGURE 15.1. **Dyadic power theory.**

Consistent with interdependence theory and resource theory, DPT treats the relative level of resources and authority held by each partner as the basis for power within the relationship. However, DPT focuses on each partner's perceptions of these constructs rather than on each partner's actual levels. DPT also describes how the resulting power affects the behavior and outcomes of each partner within the relationship. According to this theory, power is a dyadic property that depends on the resources and authority that both partners within the dyad believe they hold or have access to (see Table 15.1). Even though an individual may have considerable access to resources or authority compared with most people, he or she can still be the less powerful person in a relationship if his or her partner has even greater resources or authority. Consequently, power is not a characteristic of the individual; it is an emergent property of the relationship.

According to DPT, authority and resources are principle sources of power (see Table 15.1). Power is operationally defined as the relative potential of relationship partners to influence each other's behavior when a conflict arises between them. Authority reflects norms regarding which partner ought to control specific situations, events, or decisions within the relationship, which is similar to French and Raven's (1959) legitimate power base. A resource is defined as anything an individual can make available to his or her partner to satisfy his or her partner's needs and to promote the attainment of his or her partner's goals, as described in resource theory (see earlier discussion). Partners who have greater authority within a given decision domain (e.g., finances, parenting) tend to have more opportunities to gain and control resources relevant to that domain, such as seeking additional knowledge that can then be used to make future decisions relevant to that domain. Perceptions of relative resources and authority, not necessarily actual relative levels, combine to create perceptions of relative relationship power. Thus, even though a partner may have access to many good resources, thereby giving him or her more potential access to power, he or she may not recognize that he or she has access and, as a result, may miss opportunities to use his or her unrecognized power potential. In addition, less powerful

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partners may sometimes freely confer power on their more powerful partners by accepting that they (their more powerful partners) have greater access to certain resources or authority. DPT also claims that relative authority and resources have cyclically increasing effects on one another. Increases in relative authority produce increases in relative resources, which in turn generate increases in relative power. Authority can also moderate the relation between resources and relationship power, with resources being more predictive of power in egalitarian relationships in which norms call for equality in authority between partners (see Figure 15.1).

Increases in perceived power should also lead people to believe that they can affect or change their partner, which should increase the number of times one partner tries to change the behavior of the other (i.e., control attempts). Such control attempts and their effectiveness are the primary avenues through which power is expressed during daily social interactions (see Table 15.1). Dunbar and Burgoon (2005) proposed that this association is curvilinear, with the most control attempts occurring in relationships in which partners have equal power, given that individuals with low power should change their own behavior to meet their high-power partner's desires without the high-power partner having to control them directly. However, current evidence for this proposal is incomplete. The link between power and control attempts is also believed to be reinforcing, with greater power increasing the likelihood that control attempts will be successful, which in turn should promote greater control. However, the concept of control in DPT refers only to control over behavior; the attitudes underlying a partner's behavior are not necessarily changed by control attempts. The enactment of many successful control attempts typically results in increased power for the individual who is successful (see Figure 15.1).

Relationships, of course, do not exist in a vacuum, and the effectiveness of control attempts is not entirely dependent on the relative power of the partner who typically initiates them. Other members of one's social network, such as family and friends, may initiate countercontrol attempts whereby they try to interfere with or block the control attempts of the influence agent by encouraging the target to resist or behave differently. DPT defines countercontrol attempts as coming only from individuals outside the relationship. Countercontrol attempts often have a negative effect on the eventual success of control attempts and resulting partner compliance (see Figure 15.1).

In summary, DPT integrates several major concepts of prior power theories to create a more dyadic model outlining the bases and processes of relational power (see Table 15.1). However, certain features of the theory have constrained it from becoming a central theoretical perspective in the field. First, Rollins and Bahr (1976) defined power as existing or becoming relevant only when a conflict of goals exists between relationship partners. This definition limits power coming into play only when couples have conflict, and it does not explain how power may influence decisions (or either the agent's or the target's behavior) when partners feel neutral or have not established goals. Rollins and Bahr also characterized power as being enacted only in conflict situations that involve control attempts—that is, conscious actions in which one partner has clear intentions of changing the other partner's behavior. However, the enactment of power may also have less direct and less obvious effects on both partners' opinions and behaviors in the absence of any clearly purposeful behavior by the more powerful partner. DPT advances prior theories by incorporating partner effects into the power process in relationships, but partner effects might emerge earlier than DPT suggests, such as when individuals' perceptions of the sources of their or their partner's power affect how decisions are framed and then made. Moreover, the model is very linear. One might expect a more cyclical process, with the success of control attempts then affecting partners' perceptions of their relative power within the relationship as well as their authority, yet such feedback links are not indicated. Finally, DPT describes the sources and processes associated with power, but it says little about the short-term or long-term outcomes of power on individuals (partners) or their relationships.

Power Within Relationships Theory

Huston (1983) proposed a theory of power within relationships grounded in principles of what

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constitutes a close relationship. Close relationships are those in which both relationship partners have strong and frequent influence on how one another thinks, feels, and behaves over time and across different social contexts (Kelley et al., 1983). According to power within relationships theory, social–interpersonal power reflects the ability of one partner in a relationship to achieve his or her desired goals by intentionally influencing the other partner to facilitate (or at least not block) what he or she wants to achieve. Influence, however, is defined as occurring in situations in which one partner (the influence agent) says or does something that changes how the other partner (the target of influence) actually thinks, feels, or behaves during an interaction. Dominance is evident when influence becomes highly asymmetrical within a relationship over many decision domains, such as when one partner (almost always a much more powerful partner) makes virtually all of the decisions in a relationship. Dominance exists once fate control has been achieved (see Thibaut & Kelley, 1959).

Huston (1983) emphasized that power is the ability to exert influence, yet influence is not always exercised by more powerful partners, sometimes because the less powerful partner in a relationship automatically does what he or she thinks the more powerful partner wants before the more powerful partner even needs to exert influence. Indeed, across time, partners who wield extremely high levels of power and are dominant within a relationship are likely to make relatively few influence attempts, restricting those they do make primarily to the relatively rare occasions when their lower power partner resists or fails to comply with their preferences or desires. Nevertheless, there are bound to be some situations in most relationships when less powerful partners do decide to resist being influenced, at least temporarily. According to this theory, power is dyadic because information about both partners—including what each one is thinking, feeling, or doing in a given interaction—is needed to comprehend how, when, and why power and influence are enacted within a relationship.

Huston (1983) claimed that power and influence emanate from five causal conditions that promote or inhibit each partner's ability to intentionally influence the other or resist being influenced by him or her. These conditions include the personal attributes that each partner brings to the relationship (e.g., his or her personality traits, knowledge, skills, motives, needs), the unique attributes of the relationship (e.g., the relationship norms or rules that govern interactions and decision making), and features of the physical and social environment within which each partner and the relationship are embedded. The primary physical environment features include variables such as where the partners live, each partner's proximity to family and friends, his or her monetary resources, and the many nonsocial opportunities, challenges, and difficulties of everyday life. The primary social environment features include variables such as cultural norms, the quality of social support, access to social resources (e.g., other people to turn to for information, advice, or help), the quality of current friendships, and the structure of the family (e.g., the presence vs. absence of children). These causal conditions set the stage for each partner's power bases (French & Raven, 1959) and, in turn, each partner's ability to influence the other via the deployment of specific tactics (or countertactics) when decisions are being made in the relationship.

Let us return to our example of Richard and Mary. Because Richard entered their relationship with more money and relatively greater attractiveness, the couple may initially have negotiated a relationship norm whereby Richard usually makes most of the important, long-term decisions in the relationship and Mary handles the more routine, somewhat less important daily ones. Mary goes along with this arrangement not only because she has fewer resources and fewer good dating options but also because she loves Richard deeply. This initial arrangement permits Richard to have more power bases (e.g., reward power, coercive power, legitimate power), which allows him to use a wider variety of influence tactics on occasions when Mary does not quickly acquiesce to his preferences. As a result, most of the decision-making outcomes in their relationship, at least during its initial stages, are more in line with Richard's attitudes and preferences than with Mary's.

In sum, power within relationships theory adopts a dyadic view of power in which five causal

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conditions—features of each partner, their relationship, and the social and physical environment—set the stage for the type (base) and degree of power that each partner has in the relationship (see Table 15.1). These power bases, in turn, affect the degree to which each partner is able to both use and resist (counteract) different influence tactics. As a rule, individuals who have greater power in a relationship (or who have greater power within a given relationship domain) have the ability to exert greater influence on their partners when they want or need to, which allows them to achieve their desired goals more often. The theory says relatively little, however, about the kinds of personal outcomes that should flow from the use or receipt of influence tactics.

Power-Approach Theory

Power-approach theory (Keltner et al., 2003) melds principles from several theoretical perspectives, especially social power theory and interdependence theory, to describe power dynamics in myriad interpersonal interactions and contexts, ranging from close relationships that have less formalized roles (e.g., parent–child, husband–wife, friends) to more impersonal or even exchange-based relationships (e.g., employer–employee, international leader–international leader). Keltner et al. (2003) defined power as an individual's relative capacity to modify another person's state by providing or withholding resources on which that person depends or by administering punishments. Similar to other theoretical perspectives, one does not have power merely because one has resources; one has power because another person needs or depends on those resources. That said, individual characteristics, within-dyad (relationship) characteristics, and the broader social groups to which a person belongs can all affect the amount of power that the person has within a given relationship. Moreover, having versus not having power can have numerous social consequences associated with approach-related and inhibition-related outcomes.

Keltner et al. (2003) identified a broad range of variables linked with having high versus low power. Individual variables such as personality traits (e.g., extraversion, charisma) and physical traits (e.g., height, physical attractiveness) tend to be correlated with having somewhat greater power in many interpersonal contexts. At the dyadic level, dependence and partners' relative levels of commitment should also predict the possession of greater power. Beyond the dyad, more distal variables, such as role relationships, ethnicity, and gender, can also affect power dynamics within relationships.

With respect to the power outcomes for the more versus less powerful partner within a relationship, power-approach theory integrates power principles with motivational theories—especially Higgins's (1997) regulatory focus theory—to generate novel predictions about patterns of affect, cognition, and behavior. For example, having more power, either in absolute terms or within a relationship (i.e., relative to one's partner), should trigger a stronger promotion focus in which individuals concentrate on the positive goals they want to achieve and disregard possible costs. Conversely, not having power should activate a prevention focus in which individuals concentrate on not losing valued things that they already have. Having versus not having power should also influence the experience and expression of emotions in relationships. Indeed, having relatively greater power within a relationship is associated with experiencing more positive emotions such as amusement, enthusiasm, happiness, and love, whereas having less power predicts more negative emotions such as embarrassment, fear, guilt, sadness, and shame (Anderson, Langner, & Keltner, 2001). From a cognitive standpoint, having greater power in a relationship should produce greater attention to rewards, increased reliance on peripheral information processing and heuristic decision rules, and decreased empathic accuracy. Conversely, having less power ought to heighten sensitivity to punishment, facilitate systematic and controlled information processing, and increase empathic accuracy. Behaviorally, more powerful partners should show greater consistency of behavior across different situations, be less inclined to modify or mask their emotional expressions, and display more socially inappropriate behavior than less powerful partners, given that the behavior of more powerful partners should be less socially constrained.

In sum, power-approach theory addresses all five key questions regarding power and power dynamics

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(see Table 15.1). Similar to resource theory, it adopts a very broad view of the different levels from which power originates and within which it operates, ranging from the individual to the dyad, from social groups to the broader culture.

Comparisons of the Power Theories

Viewing the prior theories of power together allows one to identify points of consensus as well as a few disparities. All of the theories conceptualize power as an ability or potential to influence, change, or control another person. Powerful partners can choose whether or not to try to influence their partners in a given situation, but they do not need to actually use their power to be powerful. Indeed, powerful individuals may often influence their partners indirectly without making a conscious, deliberate decision to do so, such as when a low-power partner believes the high-power partner wants him or her to do something that the high-power partner may not necessarily want or desire. The six theories differ somewhat in which specific aspects of the partner can be changed when one holds greater power, ranging from behavior to personal or relational outcomes to emotional states. Interestingly, the influence of power on attitudes and beliefs has not been directly considered by most of these theories, despite the fact that this has been a major focus in the social influence literature (see the next section). In general, however, reasonable consensus appears to exist about what power entails in relationships.

Most of the power theories have focused on the antecedents of power in relationships, and many of them discuss the same individual-level and relationship-level constructs. For example, the relative balance of valued resources between partners, which is discussed in social power theory, resource theory, power-approach theory, and DPT, is uniformly identified as a critical source of power in relationships. Likewise, relative authority is mentioned by both social power theory and DPT as a foundation of power in most relationships. All of the theories also address having control over the partner's outcomes through reward or coercion. Certain aspects of the relationship, such as each partner's level of dependence on one another and the relationship, have also been proposed as important bases for power in most theories. Interdependence theory, for instance, focuses on these relational constructs quite heavily, and they are also incorporated to some degree into social power theory through the concept of the referent power base. Other relational constructs such as self-expansion (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992) and attachment orientations (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007) may also be relevant to the use of (or reactions to) power and influence, although they have not been discussed in past power theories. Except for power-approach theory and social power theory, neither of which was introduced as a theory of power in relationships per se, most power theories have a dyadic conceptualization of power and the origins of different power bases. Thus, an individual's absolute level of resources, authority, and dependence do not matter as much in determining his or her power in the relationship as the individual's relative level of these sources in relation to the current partner. For this reason alone, all six of the power theories require information about the partner (or perceptions of the partner) to ascertain which partner has more versus less power within a relationship.

Less has been hypothesized about how power is enacted or communicated during interactions between relationship partners. Resource theory, for example, focuses on antecedents of power but says nothing about how power is expressed or conveyed. The other theories address direct influence or control attempts enacted by more powerful partners, but none of them consider whether or how power should affect interactions when the more powerful partner does not intentionally attempt to exert influence. Interdependence theory and DPT both claim that, by controlling his or her partner, the more powerful partner can gain even greater power in the relationship, amplifying the power imbalance. Surprisingly little is said, however, about the role of the less powerful partner, such as whether or how he or she might resist influence or achieve greater power within the relationship across time.

The most underconsidered topic in prior power theories is the outcomes of power and influence attempts on each partner and their relationship. Power-approach theory addresses this topic fairly

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extensively, outlining the cognitive, affective, and behavioral tendencies of partners who have more versus less power in a relationship. This theory, however, focuses primarily on power in nonclose relationships (e.g., between strangers or casual acquaintances), so whether or the degree to which these documented effects necessarily transfer to close relationships is unknown. Power-approach theory also says nothing about relationship outcomes based on the power dynamics within a relationship. Interdependence theory provides some guidance on this front, proposing that as the less dependent partner in a relationship gains power or has less to lose if the relationship ends, he or she should be more inclined to terminate the relationship than the more dependent, lower power partner. Nevertheless, most of the prior power theories offer little guidance as to whether, when, or how having more versus less power in a relationship should generate specific personal or relational outcomes.

REVIEW OF THE POWER AND INFLUENCE LITERATURE

In this section, we review the empirical research that has been conducted on power and influence in relationships, focusing primarily on romantic relationships. When possible, we indicate where and how a given finding pertains to one or more of the existing power theories. However, most of the studies we discuss were not designed to test hypotheses derived from specific power theories or models. We begin by discussing how power and influence have been measured to date. Then, we review how the possession or use of power and various influence strategies or tactics are associated with assorted personal and relational outcomes.

Power and Influence Measures

Past research on social power and influence in relationships has been fraught with measurement challenges. Nearly all of this research has used self-report measures that ask relationship partners to make judgments of the relative balance of power in their relationship in general (i.e., across all types of decision domains and interpersonal situations). These measures have typically contained a small number of face-valid items such as "Indicate your judgment of the overall balance of influence in your marriage," "In your relationship, who has more power?" "How much influence do you have over your partner's actions?" and "How often do you give in to your partner's demands?" (see Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005; Felmlee, 1994; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1997). Other scales have measured power in very specific areas within relationships, such as the sexual domain (e.g., Pulerwitz, Gortmaker, & DeJong, 2000). However, power is likely to vary somewhat between partners across different relationship domains on the basis of the specific resources and power bases that each partner does or does not have with respect to a given domain. As a result, one may not be able to extrapolate findings from domain-specific measures to draw general conclusions about the overall balance of power within a relationship. Furthermore, most of the existing measures of power are rather atheoretical, focusing on face validity rather than directly assessing the processes specified in theories of power. Future theoretically grounded scales assessing power in relationships need to be designed to measure the various power bases and the direct and indirect paths of influence that should affect personal and relational outcomes.

Another strategy for measuring power and influence in relationships that does not rely on subjective perceptions of relationship partners, and can thus circumvent these perceptual biases, is observational coding (see Huston, 1983). Observational coding has been particularly popular in the more recent social influence research. A wide range of coding schemes have been developed to measure the specific influence tactics that partners use when they try to resolve a conflict or attempt to change something about each other (Oriña, Wood, & Simpson, 2002; Overall et al., 2009). Very few studies, however, have assessed the level of power of each partner by coding couple interactions. These isolated studies have treated verbal dominance behaviors, such as interrupting one's partner and the relative amount of time spent talking, as behavioral manifestations of power (Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005; Galliher, Rostosky, Welsh, & Kawaguchi, 1999). Revealed difference tasks, in which couples make a mutually agreed-on rating on a topic or issue that

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each partner has rated differently, have also been used to assess power but primarily as a more objective outcome measure (i.e., which partner's choice wins out; Huston, 1983).

Priming high-power or low-power roles has become a popular technique in the power literature outside relationships, but most relationship researchers still focus primarily on existing power dynamics in established couples. One exception is work by Fitzsimons (2010), who primed romantic partners to perceive themselves as having either low or high power by writing about a time when their "partner had control of your ability to get something you wanted, or was in a position to evaluate you" (or, for the high-power condition, when "you had control or evaluated your partner"). Future research could also manipulate power subconsciously to tests its effects on how relationship partners communicate and make important decisions. Implicit power motives, such as those measured by the Thematic Apperception Test, have important implications for how friends interact (McAdams, Healy, & Krause, 1984), yet little research has used the Thematic Apperception Test or other subconscious measures or manipulations of power in close relationships.

Desired Versus Actual Power Balance in Relationships

Most romantic couples in Western cultures claim they prefer egalitarian relationships in which both partners have equal power (Caldwell & Peplau, 1984; Galliher et al., 1999; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1997). Approximately half of all romantic relationships, however, show signs of power inequality (Bentley, Galliher, & Ferguson, 2007; Caldwell & Peplau, 1984), and these patterns are fairly stable across time in most relationships (Sprecher & Felmlee, 1997; Sprecher, Schmeeckle, & Felmlee, 2006). When power imbalances exist, both men and women usually indicate that the male partner has greater power in the relationship than the female partner (Felmlee, 1994; for an exception in African American communities, see Davis, Williams, Emerson, & Hourd-Bryant, 2000). However, because most partners divide up roles and duties within their relationship, even the generally less powerful partner often has some decision-making discretion in certain decision domains, such as how to plan or organize certain household tasks or making certain kinds of financial decisions. As one might expect, relationships in which partners have highly unequal power are characterized by lower satisfaction, less stability, and greater conflict (Caldwell & Peplau, 1984; Sprecher et al., 2006).

Effects of High Versus Low Power in and on Relationships

The bulk of research on social power has investigated how having high versus low power affects interpersonal processes and relationship outcomes. For example, individuals who either are given greater power within a newly formed relationship (with a stranger) or are led to believe they have relatively more power are less likely to adopt their partner's perspective, less inclined to take into account what she or he does and does not know, and are poorer at reading their partner's emotional expressions (Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006). Higher power individuals are also shielded from being influenced by their lower power partners. For example, they are less influenced by the ideas expressed by their partners, less likely to conform to their partner's opinions, and more influenced by their own values and opinions than by their partner's values and opinions (Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson, & Liljenquist, 2008). Having greater power also makes people more action oriented and leads them to act in line with their own beliefs, attitudes, and preferences rather than those of others (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003). There are social contexts, however, in which having greater power can make individuals more interpersonally sensitive and empathic to the wants and needs of those who have less power (Schmid Mast, Jonas, & Hall, 2009).

Keltner et al. (2003) proposed that having more power should also be associated with greater freedom and rewards, which should activate approach-related tendencies, whereas having less power ought to elicit feelings of threat, fear of punishment, and social constraint, which should trigger inhibition-related tendencies. Consistent with these conjectures, more powerful people tend to experience more positive emotions, pay more attention to

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rewards, process information in a more automatic fashion, and behave in a less inhibited manner (Keltner et al., 2003). Less powerful people, in comparison, usually experience more negative affect; focus more intensely on threats, punishments, and what their partners want to do; process information in a more systematic and controlled way; and inhibit their social behavior. Some of these intrapersonal processes may affect the specific influence tactics that individuals do (or do not) use on their partners as well as how individuals react to specific influence tactics directed at them by their partners. For example, the approach-related tendencies associated with having greater power within a relationship may lead high-power partners to use reward-based influence tactics more often, whereas the avoidance-related tendencies tied to having less power may make low-power partners acutely sensitive to receiving coercive influence attempts from their partners.

In long-term romantic relationships, the more powerful partner usually dominates communications (Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005) and often directs more aggression toward the less powerful partner than vice versa (Bentley et al., 2007). In addition, men who enjoy having greater power in their relationships or who are less happy being the less powerful partner tend to be more abusive toward their female romantic partners, more so than women who like being in the more powerful position (Rogers, Bidwell, & Wilson, 2005). Low-power partners also report having greater difficulty getting their way when making important decisions in the relationship, such as whether to use condoms during sex (Woolf & Maisto, 2008), and they devote greater effort to supporting their partner's goals instead of their own (Fitzsimons, 2010).

Weak-link partners often have comparatively more resources and power in their romantic relationships (Caldwell & Peplau, 1984; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1997). For men, having access to more or better alternative partners is associated with feeling more powerful in romantic relationships (Sprecher, 1985). Weak-link partners also dictate the long-term stability of their relationships more than strong-link (less powerful) partners do (Attridge, Berscheid, & Simpson, 1995).

Power and Influence Strategies

Researchers have tried to identify basic influence strategies (i.e., the general means by which influence agents frame and convey their positions to influence targets) and their underlying structures by empirically clustering different types of influence tactics. Marwell and Schmitt (1967), for example, examined the use of influence tactics in both impersonal and personal dyadic interactions by asking people to rate their use of 16 behavioral tactics (e.g., making promises, threats, moral appeals). From these responses, they identified five types of influence strategies: (a) the use of material and verbal rewards, (b) the use of threats, (c) the use of logic, (d) the activation of impersonal commitments, and (e) the activation of personal commitments. This study was a preliminary step toward identifying the core influence strategies that most people use in relationships. Unfortunately, rather than serving as a starting point on which future research was built, this self-report study became a prototype for later research, which continued to identify influence strategies through empirical means with little theoretical guidance (e.g., Miller, Boster, Roloff, & Seibold, 1977; Raven, Schwarzwald, & Koslowsky, 1998).

Other researchers asked people to write essays on how they typically got their way with close others (e.g., Falbo, 1977; Falbo & Peplau, 1980). These essays were then coded for the use of Marwell and Schmitt's (1967) 16 influence tactics. Multidimensional scaling analyses revealed a two-dimensional structure reflecting higher level influence strategies. The first dimension was labeled *direct tactics* versus *indirect tactics*, and the second one was labeled *bilateral tactics* (e.g., trying to negotiate with the partner) versus *unilateral tactics* (e.g., simply telling the partner what to do). People who claimed to have more power than their partners reported using more direct tactics. Using similar procedures, Cody, McLaughlin, and Jordan (1980) identified four higher level influence strategies: (a) direct–rational (reasoning), (b) manipulation (flattery), (c) exchange (negotiation), and (d) threats.

Early research on influence strategies in relationships was more closely tied to the power literature than recent research has been. Howard, Blumstein, and Schwartz (1986), for instance, examined

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whether the use of clusters (different sets) of influence tactics depended on a person's control of resources. Specifically, they wanted to determine whether resource control or other factors, such as sex role orientation, were responsible for the different types of power that men and women typically have and use. Howard et al. interviewed people about the strategies and tactics they used on their relationship partners and then categorized these responses into 24 influence tactics. These tactics formed six factors (influence strategies): (a) manipulation, (b) supplication, (c) bullying, (d) autocracy, (e) disengagement, and (f) bargaining. Being female, having more feminine traits, having less power in society, and being relatively more dependent on one's relationship partner predicted the reported use of weaker tactics, such as manipulation and supplication.

Dillard and Fitzpatrick (1985) investigated how influence appeals are verbally constructed, hypothesizing that married couples should use one or more of three general power mechanisms (i.e., influence strategies) to change their partner's behaviors or attitudes. The first general mechanism is previewing expectancies and consequences with the partner, such as emphasizing to the target (the partner) the consequences of performing or failing to perform certain requested or desired behaviors. The second mechanism involves invoking relationship identifications, which includes eliciting compliance on the basis of the target's (the partner's) valuing of the relationship and what is required to maintain it. The third mechanism is appealing to other values and obligations, which can induce behavior change by appealing to the target's core values and beliefs. However, instead of using these three global mechanisms to investigate power in relationships, many marital researchers have subsequently examined how different couple types (e.g., a demanding wife and a withdrawing husband) use the eight tactics that make up these three mechanisms. Research has also studied influence at the level of the dyad, showing that both members of a couple tend to use the same tactics when constructing influence appeals (Fitzpatrick, 1983).

More recent studies have investigated actual influence attempts observed during discussions between romantic partners, such as investigating communication strategies used when individuals are trying to regulate their partner's emotions and behavior. Overall, Fletcher, and Simpson (2006) identified and examined the effects of two partner regulation strategies, valence (positive vs. negative regulation attempts) and directness (direct vs. indirect regulation attempts). Although greater use of direct strategies was perceived by both relationship partners as less effective immediately after discussions of how one partner could change or improve something about himself or herself, direct strategies produced greater self-improvement change across time than did indirect strategies (Overall et al., 2009), with greater use of negative tactics being particularly ineffective (Overall & Fletcher, 2010). The use of regulation strategies also had effects on relationship evaluations. Specifically, receiving more influence attempts from one's partner to change an aspect of the self leads one to believe that he or she does not meet the partner's ideal standards, which in turn predicts poorer relationship evaluations and more negative self-views (Overall & Fletcher, 2010; Overall et al., 2006).

Oriña and her colleagues (e.g., Oriña et al., 2002, 2008) adopted a different theoretical approach based on core social influence processes originally discussed by Kelman (1958, 1961). According to Kelman (1958, 1961), behavior change can be achieved via three different processes, which he labeled *identification, compliance,* and *internalization.* Identification is evident when individuals agree with valued others (i.e., relationship partners) to establish or maintain a satisfying, self-defining relationship with them. Compliance occurs when individuals agree with others to gain favorable outcomes from them or to avoid unfavorable ones. Internalization occurs when individuals agree with others because the attitude position itself (i.e., the quality of its arguments) is intrinsically logical, reasonable, or compelling.

Guided by Kelman's (1958, 1961) model, Oriña et al. (2002) proposed that influence agents should use one or more of these global influence strategies to induce attitude or behavior change in their partners: relationship referencing, coercion, and logic–reasoning. Relationship referencing involves the use

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of influence tactics that invoke the personal experiences, norms, or rules that define a given relationship, such as mentioning the relationship during influence attempts or emphasizing its importance to both partners. For relationship referencing, the source of power lies in the attractiveness and value of the relationship, the benefits that arise from being in it, and the ability to pursue important relationship-based goals. Coercion involves tactics that highlight the influence agent's ability to deliver contingent consequences. Positive coercion entails the promise of positive rewards and benefits to induce targets to perform certain desired behaviors, whereas negative coercion focuses on the promise of threats of punishment. Logic and reasoning entail influence tactics that involve the presentation of factual, logical, or well-reasoned arguments to induce desired behavior or attitude change in targets. For logic–reasoning, the influence appeals themselves are intrinsically compelling to the target because they appeal to his or her personal belief system.

During observed conflict resolution discussions, romantic partners who report feeling subjectively closer to their partners or relationships are more likely to use relationship-referencing tactics that invoke relationship norms, belongingness, and the importance of the couple as a unit (Oriña et al., 2002, 2008). Furthermore, when subjectively closer men and women are more troubled by the discussion topic than are their partners, their partners are more likely to use relationship-referencing tactics. In terms of effectiveness, relationship referencing is most effective at changing partners' opinions, whereas coercion and logic–reasoning are ineffective, often pushing targets farther away from the influence agents' desired position (Oriña et al., 2002, 2008).

Viewed as a whole, the body of existing influence research does not cohere very well, and it does not permit clear conclusions about (a) which influence tactics underlie specific higher level influence strategies, (b) the major determinants of influence strategy use, or (c) the relationship outcomes associated with these strategies. This lack of coherence stems partly from the fact that most early studies of influence in relationships were not grounded in a firm theoretical base from which to identify and understand influence attempts and processes. To complicate matters, those studies that were theoretically grounded often used different theoretical frameworks and measures that were not integrated. Furthermore, most early models of influence considered the viewpoint of either the influence agent or the target, meaning that they were not truly dyadic in orientation. For example, even though Fitzpatrick's (1983) work was framed dyadically, it did not consider the unique and often divergent goals and motives that each partner often brings to a relationship. However, as we shall show, when some of these power and influence findings are considered from a truly dyadic theoretical perspective, greater integration and coherence begin to emerge.

THE DYADIC POWER–SOCIAL INFLUENCE MODEL

Prior theories of power contain important elements that explain how the characteristics of each partner within a relationship should be related to certain power bases that each partner holds, how these power bases should in turn be associated with the use of specific influence strategies and tactics, and how the use of these strategies and tactics might affect personal or relational outcomes in each partner. Our integrative model, which we call the dyadic power–social influence model (DPSIM), borrows select constructs and principles from each of the power theories we have reviewed and integrates them into a single process model that outlines the individual (partner) and relationship characteristics (dyadic) that should affect the capacity and use of each partner's potential power bases, influence strategies and tactics, and downstream personal or relationship outcomes. The DPSIM is shown in Figure 15.2. Previous power theories have highlighted some, but not all, of the central constructs (boxes) and pathways (lines) contained in this model.

Consistent with prior definitions, we define power as the ability or capacity to change another person's thoughts, feelings, or behavior so they align with one's own desired preferences, along with the ability or capacity to resist influence attempts imposed by another person (see also Galinsky et al., 2008;

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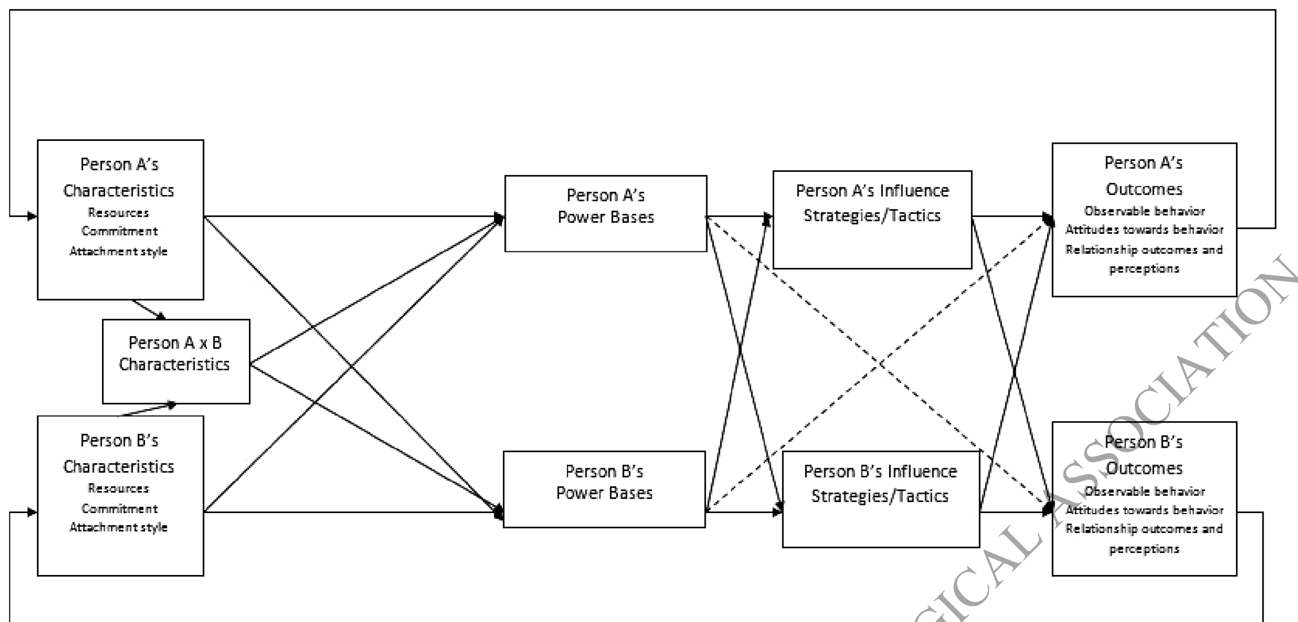

FIGURE 15.2. The dyadic power–social influence model.

Huston, 1983; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). This definition is more expansive than some prior definitions of power (see Table 15.1) because it suggests that power entails not only the ability or capacity to change the thoughts, feelings, or behavior of another person but also the ability to resist their counterinfluence attempts. The concept of effective resistance has deep roots in the power literature, beginning with how power was originally conceptualized by interdependence theorists (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959).

According to the DPSIM, four sets of constructs are critical to understanding the operation of power and influence within relationships. As shown in Figure 15.2, they include the characteristics of each person in the relationship (see the boxes labeled Person A's Characteristics and Person B's Characteristics), the type of power each person potentially has and can use (see the boxes labeled Person A's Power Bases and Person B's Power Bases), the type of influence strategies and tactics that each person is able to deploy (see the boxes labeled Person A's Influence Strategies and Tactics and Person B's Influence Strategies and Tactics), and the outcomes each person experiences after influence attempts (see the boxes labeled Person A's Outcomes and Person B's Outcomes). Although each construct can be measured in multiple ways, the most important person characteristics are the core attributes that each person brings to the relationship (i.e., his or her attractiveness, status and resources, warmth and trustworthiness; see Fletcher, Simpson, Thomas, & Giles, 1999), each person's personality traits (e.g., his or her standing on the Big Five traits; see McCrae & Costa, 1987), and each person's general orientation toward relationships (e.g., his or her attachment orientation, communal vs. exchange orientation; see Clark & Mills, 1979; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). The core power bases are French and Raven's (1959) six bases of power: reward, coercive, legitimate, expert, referent, and informational. The primary influence strategies (and their underlying tactics) exist along two dimensions (Overall et al., 2009): direct versus indirect tactics (e.g., being explicit, overt, and direct vs. being passive or covert to resolve issues or inspire change) and positive versus negative tactics (e.g., using tactics characterized by positive vs. negative affect). The principal outcomes include whether or the degree to which an influence attempt changes the targeted attitudes or behavior of each partner along with his or her more general personal outcomes (e.g., positive well-being, depressive symptoms, anxiety) or relational outcomes (e.g., satisfaction, commitment, trust; see Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000).

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Though not depicted in Figure 15.2, the DPSIM assumes that each person (each partner) is embedded in a physical and social environment that may affect the personal characteristics that he or she brings to the relationship (Huston, 1983). For instance, the local physical environment in which one has grown up and currently lives is likely to influence the financial and social resources one has (or can develop in the future; Blood & Wolfe, 1960). The local past or present social environment may also shape the orientation one adopts toward relationships, such as whether one is securely or insecurely attached or has a communal or an exchange view of how relationships should operate. The parallel lines running from left to right in the center of the model (see Figure 15.2) reflect actor effects—that is, how an actor's characteristics affect his or her own access to power bases, use of specific influence strategies and tactics, and personal or relational outcomes, statistically controlling for the partner's attributes. The nonparallel lines running from left to right represent partner effects—that is, how the partner's characteristics affect the actor's access to power bases, use of specific influence strategies and tactics, and personal or relational outcomes, statistically controlling for the actor's attributes.

To unpack the DPSIM, let us first consider the actor effects—the pathways depicted in Figure 15.2 by the parallel lines flowing from the box labeled Person A's Characteristics and from the box labeled Person B's Characteristics that then both move to the right. According to the DPSIM, each partner's personal characteristics can affect his or her ability or capacity to utilize certain power bases within the relationship. If, for example, Person A enters the relationship with substantial resources (Blood & Wolfe, 1960) or excellent alternatives to the current relationship (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), she or he should, on average, be able to leverage more bases (sources) of power to influence his or her partner more effectively and obtain the outcomes that he or she prefers in most of the decisions in the relationship. Consistent with most prior power theories, this should be particularly true if Person A has many more resources or much better alternatives relative to his or her partner. This sort of within-dyad variable is represented by the box labeled Person A × B Characteristics in the model (see Figure 15.2), which represents the statistical interaction of the two partners' characteristics on a given variable. In the current example, the Person A × Person B interaction indexes the size of the difference between the two partners' levels of resources or quality of alternatives to the current relationship. Other conceivable Person A × Person B interactions might include the magnitude of the discrepancy between partners' personal values, their personality trait scores, or other salient characteristics. Within-dyad variables also index relationship-specific rules or norms that partners develop and follow, such as which partner is responsible for making the decisions in a given domain (e.g., doing the bills, deciding where to go on vacation).

Returning to our earlier example, because Richard entered his relationship with Mary having more money and being a very good catch, he should be able to use different power bases (e.g., reward power, coercive power, legitimate power) to frame better, more convincing, or stronger influence messages that enable him to get his way in most decision-making discussions with Mary. Depending on the specific situation, Richard can leverage one or more of his potential power bases to frame highly effective influence appeals that offer Mary desirable rewards for going along with his preferences, threaten to punish her if she does not do what he prefers, call on her deep commitment to the relationship to see things his way, or use logic and reasoning to convince her to change her opinion or behavior. When certain decisions are important to Richard and Mary is likely to comply, he ought to use direct and positive influence strategies and tactics. When Mary is reluctant to agree with or comply on issues that are important to Richard, he may resort to using direct and negative influence strategies and tactics. When decisions are less consequential to Richard or when Mary needs less of a push to comply, he may use indirect strategies and tactics framed in a more positive fashion because such strategies are less likely to destabilize the relationship (Overall et al., 2009). There are likely to be situations, however, when Richard does not need to exert any direct influence on Mary to get his way

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because she has learned to anticipate and automatically defer to his preferences before an influence attempt needs to be made. The personal and relational outcomes that Richard experiences after trying to influence Mary are likely to depend on several factors, including how important the issue and decision outcome are to Richard, the degree to which he got what he wanted, how much resistance Mary put up, the extent to which negative influence strategies and tactics were used, and how Mary reacted after the discussion.

Let's now consider the partner effects—the various pathways depicted by the nonparallel lines running from the Person A to the Person B boxes and from the Person B to the Person A boxes in Figure 15.2. According to the DPSIM, the personal characteristics of each individual's (i.e., each actor's) partner may also affect the individual's ability or capacity to use power bases within the relationship. If, for instance, Person B enters the relationship with few resources or poor relationship alternatives, she or he should have fewer and weaker sources of power from which to influence his or her partner. As a result, he or she is less likely to attain the decision outcomes that he or she prefers in most—but not necessarily all—relationship-relevant decision domains. Once again, this should be particularly true if Person B has significantly fewer resources or poorer alternatives than his or her partner, as depicted by the box labeled Person A × Person B Characteristics in the model.

Consider Mary's situation. Because of Richard's comparatively greater resources and ability to find alternative partners more easily, Mary ought to have fewer and weaker power bases from which to generate persuasive influence appeals in the relationship. In most decision-making domains (especially those that are important to Richard), Mary may not be able to offer enticing rewards to get Richard to agree with her preferences, she should find it more difficult to punish him when he fails to do what she prefers, it should be more difficult to appeal to his commitment to their relationship when attempting to persuade him, and her use of logic and reasoning is likely to fall on deaf ears. Mary, in other words, should be less able to act on her personal characteristics and preferences because Richard's characteristics and preferences restrict what she can say, do, and ultimately accomplish in most relationship-based decisions. When decisions are very important to Mary, she should try to use direct and positive influence strategies and tactics, which may often have minimal or mixed success. In other situations, Mary may simply comply with Richard's preferences unless they are discussing a relationship domain in which Mary has decision-making authority. For example, Mary and Richard may have agreed (i.e., may have developed a relationship norm) that Mary usually makes the decisions in certain domains (e.g., child rearing), perhaps to ensure that both partners have a role in making certain decisions so the relationship runs more smoothly (see Farrell, Simpson, & Rothman, 2013; Huston, 1983). Indeed, as relationships develop, the less powerful partner may gradually assume more domain-specific power, which might eventually increase his or her general power in the relationship as it develops. The personal and relational outcomes that Mary experiences after trying to influence Richard should also depend on myriad factors, including how important the issue and decision outcome are to Mary, how successful she was in getting her way, the extent to which Richard used negative counterinfluence strategies and tactics, and how Richard reacted after the discussion.

As shown in Figure 15.2, two of the partner effect pathways have dashed nonparallel lines that run from the box labeled Person A's Power Bases to the box labeled Person B's Outcomes and from the box labeled Person B's Power Bases to the box labeled Person A's Outcomes. These pathways indicate that, at times, partners who wield greater general or domain-specific power might be able to achieve the outcomes they desire without having to use direct influence strategies or tactics on their partners. For example, because he holds greater overall power in their relationship, Richard (Person A) can get the outcomes he wants from Mary (Person B) because, across time, she has learned to anticipate and automatically abide by his preferences. This highlights an important and underappreciated fact about power and influence in relationships—namely, the most powerful individuals in relationships may often not need to use influence

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tactics to persuade their less powerful partners because, over time, less powerful partners either acquiesce or eventually change their opinions to be in line with those of the more powerful partner. They may do so to please their more powerful partners, avoid conflicts, maintain the relationship, or circumvent being exposed to direct, negative influence attempts. Although the relation between the capacity for power and the use of influence strategies and tactics should be positive in the early stages of relationship development, it is likely to attenuate as relationships move into the maintenance phase once stable interaction patterns have developed. In relationships in which one partner holds much more power than the other and has little regard for him or her, such as in relationships characterized by dominance (Huston, 1983), the link between power and influence attempts may actually be negative. We return to how power and influence might change across different relationship stages later in the chapter.

Across time, each partner's personal and relational outcomes may loop back to alter some of their personal characteristics (see the solid lines in Figure 15.2 running from the box labeled Person A's Outcomes to the box labeled Person A's Characteristics and from the box labeled Person B's Outcomes to the box labeled Person B's Characteristics). Unlike some power theories, such as DPT, the DPSIM assumes that certain outcomes of the power–influence process may change certain partner features. For example, if the general level of power in Mary and Richard's relationship becomes more equitable over time as Mary takes on more areas of domain-specific power and she provides Richard with better rewards and outcomes (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), Richard may gradually adopt a more communal orientation toward Mary and their relationship. This, in turn, could increase one or more of Mary's power bases and, therefore, the effectiveness of the influence strategies and tactics she can use to achieve some of her own personal goals and objectives. As most relationships develop and grow, however, partners typically identify new joint, couple-based goals (e.g., buying a house, starting a family) and they merge many of their personal goals with those held by their partners (Aron et al., 1992). This, in turn, should render the more powerful relationship partner somewhat less powerful within the relationship because what is good for Richard is now also good for Mary as he becomes more dependent on her.

Given its broader definition of power, the DPSIM suggests that the more powerful partner within a relationship should also be more able to resist the influence or counterinfluence attempts enacted by his or her less powerful partner. This greater resistance potential is not shown in Figure 15.2, but it is assumed in the DPSIM. In addition, the DPSIM focuses on both changes in observable behavior and private shifts in underlying attitudes and beliefs. Less powerful partners, therefore, can simply change their behavior to obtain desired results without altering their attitudes to maintain an existing relationship, get rewards, or avoid punishments, or they can change their underlying attitudes in response to partner influence attempts, leading to more permanent, internalization-based behavior change (Kelman, 1961).

Furthermore, similar to DPT, power is highly dependent on the perceptions of each partner in the relationship, according to the DPSIM. For example, even though a partner may have objective access to many good or valuable resources (which should give her or him access to greater power), he or she may not recognize this and, as a result, may miss opportunities to use his or her hidden power potential. Indeed, less powerful partners may at times confer or hand over some of their power to their more powerful partners by perceiving that their high-power partners have greater access to certain resources or power bases than they actually do. As discussed earlier, the DPSIM has recursive links from each person's outcomes back to his or her personal characteristics (see Figure 15.2). However, it is conceivable that the outcomes of a given influence attempt (or a series of influence attempts) may affect perceptions of not only the self's characteristics but perhaps the partner's as well. Moreover, merely having access to power bases may affect perceptions of both the self and the partner.

Consistent with interdependence theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), the DPSIM suggests that the quality of alternative partners, the level of relationship satisfaction, and the amount of dependence

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on the partner or relationship should all determine which partner has more access to different power bases and which partner should be willing to use her or his power bases to influence the other partner. Furthermore, according to the DPSIM, the less committed partner in a relationship (i.e., the weak-link partner) should hold greater power than the more committed partner (i.e., the strong link), and the less committed partner may also be more comfortable using power bases that could potentially harm the stability or well-being of the relationship. However, the more committed partner may sometimes inaccurately perceive that her or his partner has more power than he or she really does in the relationship. If so, the more committed partner's greater perceived dependence on the relationship may lead him or her to succumb to unintentional influence attempts, motivating the more committed partner to preemptively change his or her behavior to appease the less committed partner and forestall negative outcomes.

There may also be important trade-offs between high- and low-power partners in terms of the attributes or resources that are exchanged. For instance, individuals who are physically attractive are likely to have less power in the relationship if their partners place greater weight on other partner attributes, such as earning potential or warmth. In other words, more powerful partners do not inherently have more power because they have resources; their less powerful partners usually confer them with power in part on the basis of the less powerful partner's wants, needs, and desires. Finally, similar to Huston's (1983) power within relationships theory, power-approach theory (Keltner et al., 2003) draws attention to several additional proximal variables that may be relevant to power and influence in relationships, such as the ethnicity, culture, and social class of each partner. Because the DPSIM focuses mainly on the relational aspects of power, it does not directly address these other important distal variables.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As we have seen, power is a dyadic concept. The DPSIM integrates core elements of each existing power theory into a single dyadic framework. For example, it acknowledges that each partner (Person A and Person B) resides in a physical and social environment, and each partner is likely to bring different resources, goals, needs, motives, and personal characteristics to the relationship. These attributes set the stage for the type of power bases that each partner has and can use, which in turn dictates the specific influence strategies and tactics that each partner uses to get his or her way in decision-making situations. The use of these influence strategies and tactics then affect attitude and behavior change, along with the personal and relational outcomes experienced by each partner. The DPSIM also suggests that power dynamics in a relationship are likely to be fluid processes in which both partners, as well as their unique, interactive characteristics, affect one another's outcomes.

In this final section, we discuss how power and influence may differ depending on the stage a relationship is in (fledging, established, or transitional). We conclude by suggesting some promising and important directions for future research.

Relationship Stage Model of Power

In this chapter, we have argued that theoretical, conceptual, and methodological problems have impeded our understanding of power within established relationships. Part of the reason for this is that our understanding of power and how it is used depends on when power and influence processes are studied in relationships. Relationship partners confront different types of challenges, questions, and issues at different relationship stages, which should have important consequences for the use of power, influence processes, and their ultimate outcomes. By ignoring the stage of the relationship, researchers might not be asking the right questions, studying the appropriate processes and behaviors, and drawing appropriate conclusions.

Let's now consider how power is likely to unfold during three relationship stages: (a) the fledgling relationship stage when partners are just getting to know each other, (b) the established relationship stage when partners are trying to further develop and maintain their relationship, and (c) transitional stages such as the transitions to marriage, parenthood, or retirement when partners must negotiate new roles, new patterns of interaction, and

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sometimes new identities. As shown in Table 15.2, the key challenges that many partners face at each relationship stage are likely to affect the salience and attention they place on the power dynamics in their relationship, the communal versus exchange orientation displayed by each partner, the degree to which there is role differentiation in how decisions are managed and made, and the degree of automaticity of thought, feeling, and behavior during decision-making discussions.

During the fledgling relationship stage, one key challenge is to establish a power structure in the relationship that satisfies both partners, given the attributes that each one brings to the relationship. As shown in Table 15.2, the enactment of influence attempts and the emerging power dynamics in the relationship should be especially salient and important to both partners during the fledgling stage as partners develop norms and rules for making different decisions in certain domains and negotiate the power dynamics in their developing relationship. To promote equality and equal influence during this stage, most partners may adopt an exchange orientation toward most decisions, regardless of the decision-making domain or their areas of expertise, by exploring, talking about, and making many decisions together. Decision making and influence attempts should be carefully framed and processed by each partner to ensure that neither partner is being taken advantage of or treated unfairly, given what each partner brings to the relationship.

The building of trust should be crucial for the establishment of power dynamics within fledgling relationships and for movement toward the established relationship stage. In fledgling relationships, the degree which an individual can trust his or her partner should be inferred from clear conflicts of interest in which the partner forgos what is best for him or her and instead does what is best for his or her partner or the relationship (Simpson, 2007). Once forged, a basic level of trust allows both partners to feel comfortable relinquishing some decision-making power in certain relationship domains, which should facilitate the differentiation of decision-making roles within the relationship.

During the established relationship stage, a fundamental challenge is to maintain equilibrium and stability in the power structure in the relationship unless the structure is unsatisfactory to one or both partners, especially the more powerful one. Automaticity in decision making and power dynamics should characterize this stage. Relationship roles and expectations should be well established, and partners should act in line with established patterns of influence and power in the relationship (see Table 15.2). By this stage, partners should have divided up specific decision-making domains so that each partner assumes primary responsibility for making certain decisions (e.g., paying the bills, shopping, household decisions). This partitioning of decision making is more efficient than one partner making all the relationship-relevant decisions or both partners

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TABLE 15.2

Relevance of Relationship Stages for Power and Influence

Stage	Key challenge	Power and influence salience	Processing of decision making	Communal versus exchange orientation	Differentiation across domains
Fledgling relationship stage	Establish a satisfying power structure	High	Effortful	Exchange	No
Established relationship stage	Maintain equilibrium and stability in power structure	Low	Automatic	Communal	Yes
Transitional stages	Rebalance power structures	Higher in relevant domains	Effortful	Exchange (particularly in relevant domains)	Yes (but changing)

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being involved in all decisions because it requires less time and less mental energy from both partners. However, if one examines behaviors and decision making within a single decision-making domain rather than across all domains, one could make erroneous conclusions about the actual power dynamics within a relationship.

In established relationships, interactions that involve influence attempts should be fairly routine, and they should not provide much new diagnostic information about each partner's responsiveness to the other's needs because many domains of expertise and decision making have already been partitioned and established. As a result, power and influence processes should be less salient and should not be processed as carefully in light of the fact that decision making has become more automated, routine, and less effortful. In many established relationships, partners should adopt more of a communal orientation, assuming that momentary imbalances in power or influence in the relationship are likely to even out over time or across the different decision-making domains. However, this assumes that sufficient trust has developed between the partners; individuals in established relationships who do not trust their partners should continue to attend closely to the balance of power within their relationship just as they did during the fledgling stage, given their continued concerns that their partners might not be sufficiently responsive to their needs and best interests.

Transitional relationship stages are those in which resources or other power-relevant circumstances change (e.g., the transition to retirement) and decision-making domains are added to or removed from the relationship (e.g., the transition to cohabitation or parenthood). During transitional periods, the key challenges are to redistribute and rebalance the power structure within the relationship as roles change and decision-making domains shift. To regain satisfactory equilibrium in the power structure, couples must often renegotiate the balance of power in the new or changed set of domains. During these transitions, power processes should once again become salient, and decision making should once again become more controlled, systematic, and effortful as partners renegotiate new roles, expectations, and issues in their relationship (see Table 15.2). However, rather than attending closely to all discussions that might have implications for the allocation of power (as couples do in fledgling relationships), partners in transitional relationships should pay particular attention to decision-making domains that could be taken over by their partners, such as when one partner must stop doing important activities because of declining health. During this stage, partners should once again adopt more of an exchange orientation as they negotiate and gain (or redivide) control over new or revised tasks and issues. Moreover, partners should once again engage in more information processing until new relationship norms and roles have been agreed on and become stable.

In summary, researchers must also consider the possible effects of different relationship stages when studying power and influence in ongoing relationships. Partners in fledgling relationships may be better able to answer questions about the actual power dynamics and influence attempts within their relationships more accurately because these issues are more salient and effortfully processed than they are in established relationships. If one measures power in a single decision-making domain rather than across all domains in a relationship, there are likely to be more decision-making asymmetries in established relationships than in transitional or fledgling relationships because of the greater differentiation in decision-making power across domains within most established relationships. Moreover, if one studies relationships during a major life transition, partners may act very differently in terms of their influence attempts and responses than they would before or after the transition, at least until the power dynamic in their relationships returns to some equilibrium.

Future Directions and Conclusions

There are several important directions in which future research on power and social influence in relationship should head. Perhaps the two most pressing directions are testing the core predictions of the DPSIM model and the stage model of power dynamics within relationships.

Many of the pathways in the DPSIM are based on either theoretical propositions or indirect, preliminary empirical findings. For example, we still do not

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know whether or how partners trade off the various personal characteristics they contribute to their relationships (such as attractiveness, status, resources, or warmth), or how these trade-offs affect the power structure and influence dynamics within relationships as they develop. We also know little about what happens when the characteristics of one or both partners change during the course of a relationship and how this may alter the power bases or influence tactics deployed by each partner. In addition, remarkably little is known about whether, when, or how each of French and Raven's (1959) power bases lead to the enactment of specific influence strategies and tactics, especially in established relationships in which the repeated use of certain tactics (such as coercion or reward) may become less effective as partners assume more domain-specific decision-making roles and become more interdependent. We also know virtually nothing about how more powerful partners in relationships decide to use certain power bases rather than others and how they intermix different influence strategies and tactics over time to generate optimal attitude or behavior change in their less powerful partners with the fewest negative ramifications for them, their low-power partners, or their relationships.

Furthermore, very little is known about whether or how the use of certain influence strategies and tactics (e.g., direct–positive tactics, indirect–negative tactics) affects the personal or relational well-being of the influence target as well as the influence agent. This is particularly true of the possible long-term effects associated with the consistent use of specific influence strategies and tactics (e.g., direct–negative tactics, indirect–positive tactics). Little if any research has examined whether or how the outcomes of repeated influence attempts across time circle back to change either partner's personal or relational features, such as their personality traits or their broader relationship orientations. Finally, research needs to clarify whether and how Person A × Person B characteristics, such as large discrepancies between partners on certain personal characteristics or the emergence of special relationship norms and rules, affect access to different power bases and the use of different influence strategies and tactics.

Very little research has focused on the developmental stages of relationships, and even less has investigated whether or how they affect power dynamics in relationships. Although grounded in theory, our stage model of power is still speculative and has not been tested. Future researchers need to observe couple interactions and collect both partners' reports of power dynamics in different decision-making domains at different relationship stages to determine the validity of the hypotheses regarding salience, automaticity, differentiation, and communal versus exchange orientation. This developmental perspective on relationships could also be fruitfully applied to other aspects of relationships, and it could clarify how the progression of close relationships in earlier stages influences later outcomes, such as relationship dissolution, stability, or infidelity.

In conclusion, as Bertrand Russell observed nearly 75 years ago, power may be the fundamental concept in the social and behavioral sciences. Although the construct of power is difficult to define, measure, and test, it is far too important to ignore or relegate to mere theoretical speculations. It must be studied and tested, particularly in the context of established relationships. We hope that the DPSIM and the ideas about power dynamics at different relationship stages will stimulate renewed interest and research in power and social influence in ongoing interpersonal contexts.

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