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Introduction

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

conceptualize and theorize power and resource inequality as interrelated phenomena.

Defining Power: Various Views

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

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

Although there are many ways to dissect the literature on power and resource inequality we see four broad themes that traverse the social psychological landscape. We explore and elaborate each of these themes, in turn, in the sections that follow. First, perhaps the most prevalent idea in this literature is that power has the capacity to divide, create differential benefits, or be an exploitative force in social relationships. Here power is presumed to be the causal agent that produces resource inequality (but see Berger et al. 1985 for the converse argument). This theme appears in the conflict approaches of Marx where power and resource inequality reside with those who control the means of production, in Dahrendorf’s (1959) thesis that class-based power resides with those who control and define authority, and in the many

network approaches that seek to predict resource inequality from the power associated with network location. The second theme emphasizes the human capacity to create, control, and reproduce symbolic meanings in establishing power relations. This perspective focuses on the capacity for powerful people to symbolically define situations in ways that foster and maintain resource inequality. A key issue in this tradition is to determine how symbolic interpretations at the micro level interact with or are affected by larger macro-structural constraints. The third theme stands in direct opposition to the first and is perhaps the most counter-intuitive. This line of inquiry documents how power can create solidarity, unity, and cohesion among individuals (Bacharach and Lawler 1980, 1981; Durkheim 1915). The fundamental insight is that power can be a positive force that brings individuals together around a common task or activity, and as a result, creates positive emotional experiences, a sense of solidarity or cohesion, and increases long term commitment. The final theme we cover represents more of an ontological approach than a unified and coherent body of theory and research. Many researchers over the past half century have sought to document how power processes connect with or produce a variety of other social psychological phenomena such as status distinctions (Lovaglia 1994; Thye 2000), emotional reactions (Lawler 2001), perceptions (Simpson and Borch 2005), and perceived legitimacy (Della Fave 1980). We provide a select review of these areas focusing on the more contemporary findings.

The Differentiating Aspects of Power

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

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

Exchange Theories of Power and Resource Inequality

Perhaps the most formal and well-tested theories of power and resource inequality can be found in the social exchange tradition. Contemporary exchange theories of power and resource inequality can be traced to the early work of Homans (1958), Blau (1964), Coleman (1963), and Dahl (1957). Adapting ideas from behaviorism and operant psychology, Homans and Blau emphasized the behavioral underpinnings of power and exchange. In particular, a number of assertions characterize this overall approach, including the ideas that (i) rewards determine the probability of an action, (ii) stimulus-response connections

generalize to other *similar* stimuli, (iii) more valued actions are more likely to be performed, and (iv) the more often a person receives a reward, the more satiated the person becomes. Early scholars adopted a strategy of theory building that entails a kind of psychological reductionism predicated on the idea that psychological propositions are the most general in form, and thus, social relations are best studied in behaviorist terms.

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

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

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

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

Emerson's original power dependence theory has given rise to numerous other lines of work on power and resource inequality. For instance, Molm (1988, 1990) has used the power dependence framework to explicate differences in reward-based power (i.e., when A's power resided in B's dependence on A) and punishment-based

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Overall, the above branches of social psychology have much to say about the connections between power and resource inequality. Work in the power dependence tradition points to relational interdependencies as the basis of resource inequality. Simply stated, those who have greater access to valued goods or themselves possess highly valued goods have power over those who do not. From this perspective, to have power is

to use power, and this itself produces resource inequality. Elementary theory tells us that often-times those dyadic interdependencies are functions of the capacity for the network to produce the exclusion. The resistance model implies that the material conditions around us (what is my best hope or maximal profit in this relation versus what happens if I fail to make an exchange) determines your level of power in relations. Like power dependence theory, the presumption is that those who have power will use it, and again, this is the basis for resource inequality. Further, if one can quantify those best hopes and worst fears, the resistance model makes precise, ratio-level predictions for exchange outcomes and resource inequalities. The next section focuses not on material conditions and dependence, but on the meanings and interpretations associated with power and resource inequality.

The Symbolic Aspects of Power

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

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

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

to understanding power and resource inequality draw explicit attention to the fact that power as a process of negotiation can be both divisive *as well as* integrating. This unique insight, as we shall see, stands as one obvious and important point of overlap between interactionist treatments of power and resource inequality and those tied to other theories within social psychology.

Linking Power and Resource Inequality

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

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

More recently, Dennis and Martin (2005) offered another argument against the alleged criticism that SI is "unable to adequately conceptualize 'macro' phenomena such as social structure, patterns of inequality and power" (p. 191). However, whereas Musolf had argued that the criticism was *originally* on target and had only been overcome through a concerted theoretical and empirical response, Dennis and Martin (2005) argue that SI has *never* neglected matters of power, resource inequality, and social structure, but rather it has addressed them on its own idiographic terms—terms that "reflect the fundamental premises of...its pragmatist tradition" (p. 196). When it comes to studies of deviance and education, for instance, Dennis and Martin describe how interactionists have examined power relationships and their uncertain, contingent, and unanticipated consequences in "real-life settings," showing the myriad ways in which meanings delivered from larger "cultural patterns and institutional constraints" are actively negotiated by individuals *in situ*, and all without reifying concepts such as power and structure in the mode of sociology proper (p. 201). Thus

while interactionist studies of deviance, education, and other social phenomena may well have "deepened macrosociological analyses of power and inequality," asking interactionists to do even more to shore up mainstream sociology is antithetical to the perspective's role as a "*coherent theoretical alternative* to those [mainstream] approaches [original emphasis]" (p. 204). In short, Dennis and Martin prescription for SI's role in conceptualizing and analyzing power and resource inequality is this: "[E]nduring differentials in the *capacity* [emphasis added] of some people to do things to others...must be understood as the outcomes, over time, of social processes—often quite prosaic—which ultimately produce patterns of decisive advantages and disadvantages, often involving the accumulation (or loss) of significant resources—money, land, military might, prestige, and so on" (p. 208). These processes and highly variable, situationally negotiated capacities, they argue, cannot be described with universals and cannot be abstracted from their moment-to-moment creation, and so trying to fit SI into the current of mainstream sociology or social psychology (e.g., Musolf's effort) is a sell-out that betrays the perspective's theoretical and philosophical foundations of Mead's pragmatism.

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

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

Unlike Schwalbe et al. (2000) and Dennis and Martin (2005), other contemporary theorists bring us full circle to Musolf's (1992) approach insofar as they have not seen it fit to reject differentiation among theoretical explanations in terms of the scale of analysis. For example, Hallett (2007, p. 148) provides a "meso-level account of the interactional-institutional link" in application to power processes within an educational institution. In this account, Hallett cleverly integrates Goffman's micro-social analysis of the "interaction order" with Bourdieu's institutional-level analysis of symbolic power, capitalizing on the strengths of each, and in such a way that overcomes the limitations of both the former (i.e., too heavy a focus on the "here-and-now") as well as the latter

(i.e., over-determined structuralism). The result is a distinctive "negotiated order" synthesis that explains how micro interactions involving deference and demeanor are "enabled and constrained by institutional pressures, local contexts, and features of the immediate situation" (p. 149). In short, economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital are all resources existing in "social space" that shape specific patterns of deference and demeanor in micro-interactional settings.

Conceptualizing Power

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

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

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

From Power to Cohesion

Among interactionist and even other approaches, Luckenbill’s conceptual framework stands out in emphasizing that power and resource inequality

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

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

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