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SOCIAL INFLUENCE AND POWER*

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*This article, much of which reports work conducted under this contract will appear in I. D. Steiner and M. Fishbein (Eds.), Readings in Contemporary Social Psychology, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965 (in press). Comments are invited. Successive changes and expansion of the analysis of influence were developed in conjunction with research supported by the Group Psychology Branch of the Office of Naval Research. Some parts of this essay will also appear in my Interpersonal Relations and Behavior in Groups (New York): Basic Books, Inc., 1965), a volume in the series "Basic Topics in Psychology" edited by Edwin G. Doring.

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Social Influence and Power

Bertram H. Raven

Social influence is defined here as change in a person's cognition, attitude, or behavior, which has its origin in another person or group. We are interested in such phenomena as: The policeman influences the motorist to move his car; the teacher influences the student to use a specified method in solving a mathematical problem; the mother influences her child to avoid playing in the street; the flying saucer fancier influences his friend to "see" a flying saucer in a fuzzy cloud formation. Others have considered these situations in terms of "imitation," "suggestion," "persuasion," or "contagion." We will use the word "power" to mean potential influence--or, conversely, influence is kinetic power. This paper will develop further an approach to the analysis of social influence and power which was first presented in a joint paper with J. R. P. French, Jr. (French & Raven, 1959). A number of studies, many of which grew out of other theoretical orientations, will be presented to illustrate the usefulness of the present conceptualization.

Social Dependent and Social Influence

In many cases of social influence, the changes which result involve dependence upon the source of influence, the influencing agent. Doing thousands of simple addition problems would likely have no meaning for a subject in an experiment, nor would he continue so boring a task if he did not relate his behavior to the experimenter, the experimenter's right to prescribe that behavior, or the implicit threat the experimenter could utilize if the subject were not to comply. We would, therefore, call this socially dependent, or merely dependent influence. If the experimenter had carefully explained to the student subject that, while he had no further obligation to the experimenter, doing these addition problems would aid the subject in an important mathematics examination, it is possible that the subject would do the work, but the source of the influence would no longer be relevant. The student's behavior would now be socially independent of the influencing agent. It would, however, be dependent upon a number of other cognitions in the subject's cognitive system--he would see his behavior as relevant to his studies. We will call this change independent influence even though it is an outgrowth of the communication from the experimenter. As an analogy, we might point to F. Heider's discussion of two classes of movements of a ball.

"In one case, a ball is pushed so that it rolls across a plane. In another case, the ball is guided by a hand and its movements are dependent at each moment on the movement of the hand...in the first case, an influence from the outside is active once...in the other case, when the ball is guided during the whole movement, the course of events is continuously influenced from the outside" (Heider, 1959, pp. 4-5).

The second case represents dependent influence, the hand being the influencing agent. In the first case, the movement of the pushed ball is independent of the influencing agent once it has received its initial impetus, but it is, of course, dependent upon a number of other elements such as the surface of the plane below, the surface of the ball itself, gravity, air pressures and currents, etc. In the same fashion, independent influence will occur as the result of an act on the part of the agent, but will thenceforth be independent of the agent, dependent instead on a number of other elements in the influencee's environment.

Independent Influence Stemming from Information

Independent influence is the result of a basic change in cognitive elements and its basis is information communicated by the agent. For this reason, it was earlier referred to as "informational influence" (French & Raven, 1959). It is the content of the communication which is important, not the nature of the influencing agent.

A vacuum cleaner salesman may convince the housewife to purchase a new carpet sweeper. He would do this by emphasizing the advantages of the machine which he offers for sale while stressing the disadvantages of the housewife's older model. If he is successful, he will have established new cognitive elements, and new relationships for the housewife. The resulting informational influence would thus become independent of the influencing agent.

Much of the research on effectiveness of different media of communication relates to informational influence. Informational influence will be more effective when the object of change is ambiguous and subject to cognitive re-organization.

Public-Dependent Influence and Its Sources: Coercion and Reward

While it is the information or content of the communication which is the base for independent influence, there are a number of sources of socially dependent influence. In some cases observability by the influencing agent is necessary for influence to occur and continue, while in other cases observability is not important. Thus a distinction has sometimes been made between public-dependent influence and private-dependent influence (French & Raven, 1959). In the latter instance, the influencee is unconcerned about the possibility that the influencing agent will know whether or not he has complied.

There are two sources of public-dependent influence: coercion and reward, both mediated by the influencing agent. Coercive power stems from the ability of the agent to mediate punishment for the influencee; reward power results from the ability of the agent to mediate rewards. In keeping with our general orientation, it is not the objective ability of the influencing agent to mediate such rewards and punishments which is important, but rather the potential rewards and punishments as perceived by the influencee. Examples of reward power might include (a) a supervisor's ability to increase a worker's pay for increasing production, (b) a mother's willingness to pay her child fifty cents for mowing the lawn, (c) the behavior of a member of a teen-age gang who commits a petty theft because he hopes thereby to win the approval of his companions. Coercive power would result from (a) the supervisor's capacity to dismiss a worker, (b) a sergeant's ability to assign an enlistee to kitchen duty, (c) a mother's threat to withhold her love from her child unless he tidies up his room. Note that, in each case, the first two examples are of an impersonal nature and the last is personal. Approval, love, acceptance, liking, and agreement may become commodities which represent potential

reward; disapproval, dislike, hatred, rejection, and disagreement may become potential sources of coercive power which may be more potent than an impersonal punishment, such as receiving a spanking for non-compliance. The potency of personal coercive or reward power is a function of the influencee's evaluation of the influencing agent.

Illustrations of the coercive and reward power of a supervisor over the worker seem quite obvious. There are also clear instances of the coercive power of the work group over the individual worker. A clothes presser, recently hired in a factory, rapidly learns her job and increases her rate of production to the point where it clearly exceeds the group average. Soon there are evidences of disapproval by fellow workers; she is subjected to ridicule and isolation until her production is lowered to the group average. The public-dependent nature of the influence is apparent when she is removed from her work-group and her production rate soars (Coch & French, 1948).

Private-Dependent Influence and Its Sources: Expertness, Reference, and Legitimacy

Three sources of social power--expertness, reference, and legitimacy--result in social influence which is dependent upon the influencing agent, but wherein observability is unimportant. As compared to influence stemming from reward and coercion, the effects continue regardless of whether or not the influencee believes that his behavior will become apparent to the influencing agent.

Expert power stems from the attribution of superior knowledge or ability to the influencing agent. A teacher tells the student to solve a mathematics problem by means of a specified formula and the student follows his teacher's advice. If the student does so because he now understands why that particular formula will bring forth the solution, informational influence has taken place. Such influence is independent of the agent. However, if the student uses the formula without seeing its utility, but on faith that the teacher, being more skilled in mathematics, must know that such is the road to a solution, expertness is the basis for influence, and the influence is socially dependent. Furthermore, given such faith, the influence is private--observability is unimportant. The student will show signs of influence even if the teacher is not able to see whether he has complied. Since expert influence is dependent, any later knowledge which raises questions about the teacher's expertise will reduce or eliminate the change which has occurred. This will not be true in the case of informational influence.

Referent Influence occurs when a person uses another person or group as a "frame of reference," as a background or yardstick, against which he evaluates some aspect of himself. We tend to adopt opinions, attitudes, and behaviors similar to those with whom we identify and opposite to those from whom we dissociate ourselves. Many of the studies of balance, congruence, or dissonance reduction in social relationships can be seen as instances of referent influence. If an individual finds that two persons whom he likes dislike one another, he may tend to reject one or both of them; if they are perceived as liking one another, he is more apt to continue his friendship with them (Festinger & Hutte, 1954). The same can be seen on a much larger scale in a study of the effects of nominating conventions and elections on the evaluation of political candidates. In 1960, students who had already indicated their political affiliation were asked on several occasions to evaluate potential presidential candidates on a semantic differential scale which allowed for measurement of perceived deviation from an "ideal president." As might be expected, respondents tended to favor potential candidates who were members of their own party, but polarization was very clear immediately after the

nominating conventions--the Republican candidate became even more attractive to Republicans, the Democratic candidate looked even more like an "ideal president" to Democrats. There was also a rejection of Kennedy by the Republicans, though there was no comparable rejection of Nixon by Democrats. These polarizing effects occurred as soon after the conventions that it is unlikely that new information about the candidates was responsible for the changes. Nominating conventions and the campaign led to further salience of the political parties as reference groups, such that by November referent influence was particularly great. The election, however, appears to have had the effect of suddenly reducing the referent influences of political parties, and very soon after the election the candidate of the opposing party was seen in a much more favorable light. This was particularly true for the president-elect as rated by members of the losing party--suggesting that "the nation as a whole" replaced the political party as a source of referent influence (Raven & Gallo, in press).

It is often the case that a person must evaluate his abilities in order to predict how well he will do on a task, or to set some level of aspiration. If he has no prior experience on a task which could serve as a frame of reference, his judgment of himself will be uncertain and will fluctuate. In this event, knowledge of the abilities of others may serve as a frame of reference. In a class in introductory psychology, students who were asked to predict their scores on the first examination were very inaccurate. When students in a similar class were told that the average male pre-medical student had answered 50 items correctly, accuracy of prediction increased dramatically. The referent group offered a point on a yardstick against which students could predict their own position (Raven & Fishbein, in press).

Legitimate influence. There is considerable evidence to indicate that there are broad, general, norms about the behaviors, beliefs, opinions, and attitudes that are appropriate or proper in a given situation. Whether such determinations come from tradition, from internalized values, or from present expectations of others, each person carries with him a set of prescriptions which have the nature of "oughtness." Each person carries similar prescriptions which he applies to others. This dimension of evaluation could be called "legitimacy"--some behaviors are seen as legitimate, some as non-legitimate. Legitimate behaviors may differ according to a person's position in a social structure. In the family, there are some behaviors which are appropriate for the father, some for mother, and some for the older and younger child. Included in these "role prescriptions" is the expectation that a person in one position may legitimately determine behaviors or beliefs of one in another position, and the requirement that the latter obey the former. Legitimate influence then is based on the influencee's acceptance of a relationship in the power structure such that the agent is permitted or obliged to prescribe behaviors for him and the influencee is legitimately required to accept such influence (cf. Weber, 1947; Goldhammer & Shils, 1939).

It has been demonstrated that members may accept a group as an agent that legitimizes the power of a supervisor (Raven & French, 1958). Other studies have indicated that a subject in an experiment accepts a structural relationship with the experimenter which gives the latter very great legitimate power over the subject--the ability to influence him to do a meaningless task for long hours (Orne, 1962) or to go counter to basic values of interpersonal behavior by giving supposedly painful or even harmful shocks to another subject (Milgram, 1963). It may be recalled that former officials of Nazi extermination camps insisted that they had to

commit their cruel deeds because legitimate power figures ordered them to do so.

Negative Influence

Thusfar we have discussed influence mainly in terms of changes of the influencee which are in the direction of the wishes of the agent, or changes which make the influencee more similar to the agent. However, some instances of influence are negative; changes occur which are opposed to the intentions of the agent or which increase the discrepancy between the influencee and the agent. We have already alluded to negative referent influence--where the influencee does not see himself as a member of a social unit or tends to disassociate himself from the agent. The "beatniks" or "Bohemians" may claim to be unconcerned about the norms of society as a whole, desiring to be non-conformists. But they strive to behave, look, and dress differently because society serves as a very powerful negative referent for them. Parents may sometimes use other children as negative referents for their own: "Don't shout like that. Do you want to be like Johnny?" Negative expert influence might account for the "boomerang effect." A film designed to create a more favorable attitude toward Britain during World War II actually led many of its viewers to become more negative. Suspicion that the communicator was attempting to influence the viewers in a direction not necessarily in their own best interests led to negative expert influence which was greater than the positive informational influence. (Hovland, Lumsdaine, & Sheffield, 1949). Negative legitimacy also operate in certain rare cases, such as those involving prisoners of war who define the role structure as demanding that they do the opposite of whatever the captor requests. Negative informational influences may occur when the agent inadvertently calls the attention of the influencee to factors which lead him to diverge from the agent. Coercion and reward may also produce negative effects, but generally by affecting one of the other sources, as will be indicated later.

Secondary Influence

A little boy, seeing for the first time a bowl of porridge which appears unappetizing, may take his first spoonful only because his mother threatens him with punishment if he does not do so. If the boy finds that the taste is indeed quite pleasing, behavior resulting from coercion has led to new cognitions, and the initially public-dependent change has become independent. Similar secondary changes have occurred in the case of restaurateurs who first served members of minority groups after the passage of a non-discrimination law (coercion or legitimacy) and subsequently found that their anticipated loss of business did not materialize. College students, in an experiment, found themselves holding opinions with respect to a juvenile delinquency case which were sharply at variance with those of their fellow group members. Change was especially likely when students were asked to write descriptions of the case for other group members, even though there was no necessity for them to state their opinions. The change was particularly great when there was a possibility that the student might be rejected from the group for holding contrary opinions. The point of interest here is the evidence that students in writing about the case were likely to emphasize the information from the case which supported the group's point of view (coercive influence) and later to change their private opinions to bring them into line with the content which they had communicated (Raven, 1959).

Festinger suggests that results such as those obtained above might also occur as a consequence of dissonance reduction--one experiences dissonance if one behaves in a manner which is inconsistent with one's cognitions, and one can reduce dissonance by changing one's cognitions. This would occur, however, only when coercion and reward are not very great, but great enough to produce public-dependent change. When rewards or coercion are very great they may provide sufficient justification for compliance without dissonance, and no secondary change will result (Festinger, 1957).

The exercise of one type of power may have a secondary influence upon another type of power. A supervisor who used coercive power to influence his workers to change their rate of production will obtain public-dependent influence, but the workers will personally reject the supervisor, and negative referent influence may operate on their private opinions regarding rate of production. This negative change is likely to show itself when the supervisor is away and cannot ascertain the extent of conformity (Raven & French, 1958).

Finally, secondary influence can sometimes be obtained by changing the perceptions of the power source. During World War II, a series of studies were conducted on changing food habits. It was found that housewives could not be influenced to buy sweatbreads and other unpopular meats through the informational or expert influence of a lecturer. However, groups of housewives, encouraged to discuss the problems of the meat shortage, and agreeing as a group to buy these meats, could influence the food habits of individual members--powerful referent influence was operative (Lewin, 1952). Similar results were obtained in studies of group decision in industrial settings (Coch & French, 1948).

Manipulation

The term manipulation is generally used to refer to social influence wherein the intentions of the agent are hidden from the influence. In this sense, it might be considered a form of secondary influence. One may imagine a political campaign worker, probably apocryphal, who deliberately makes himself extremely obnoxious at a bar, then leaves, advising the others to "Vote for Blotz," the opposing candidate. This person has established himself as a negative referent, hoping thereby to influence others to behave in a manner opposite from that which they believe is his preference. Sometimes a cynical group leader may skillfully guide group discussion toward a decision which appears to come from the group, but which he has selected beforehand. The result is referent influence from the group on individual members, but this effect stems secondarily from the influence of the leader on the group. Manipulation runs counter to basic societal values and when it is discovered by the influencee it is likely to establish the manipulator as a person with very strong negative referent power. Consequently, when manipulation is apparent it is likely to have an effect which is opposite to that intended by the manipulator.

Comparison of Sources of Social Influence

Several investigations have examined two or more sources of power with the aim of comparing their stability, dependence upon observability, effect on perceptions of the influencing agent, or effects on other sources. We illustrate with three examples:

Reward-Coercion, Expertness, and Reference. These sources of social influence were compared in an ingenious experiment by Kelman (1950). The study grew out of a somewhat different theory of social influence, but the variables are clearly similar to those which have been discussed above. The subjects, freshmen in an all-Negro college, were presented with a tape-recorded communication which advocated a position at variance with their own: the communication asserted that some all-Negro colleges should remain segregated even after all other universities have been integrated. Different groups of subjects heard the same communication, but it was attributed to different communicators. In a condition which combined reward and coercive power, the communicator was identified as a very powerful president of a Foundation for Negro Colleges, who could be expected to support the college and students who agreed with him and effectively to punish those who disagreed with him. In this condition, student's attitudes changed in the direction of the communicator, but only when the students were informed that their responses on the questionnaire would be seen by him--public dependent influence had resulted. Other students heard the same communication, this time attributed to a referent power--a Senior and president of the student council in a leading Negro university who was also said to represent the opinions of most Negro college students. Referent influence led to change which was equally great regardless of whether questionnaire responses would be seen by the agent. However, the effects of the referent influence were unstable and did not appear on questionnaires administered several weeks later. In an expert power condition, the communicator was introduced as a professor of history, with considerable knowledge about minority groups and the Negro community. In that condition, influence was great regardless of whether observability was present, and it continued at a high level for several weeks thereafter.

Legitimacy and Coercion. Female subjects in this experiment were presented with the task of cutting patterns out of cardboards. Since they needed a supervisor, it was decided that they should elect one. The election served to give legitimate power to the supervisor, a fact which was clearly evidenced by responses to questionnaires. In some conditions, for reasons which were unclear to the subjects, the elected supervisor was replaced by one of the other subjects. In accordance with instructions communicated privately by the experimenter, the supervisor told all subjects to cut more slowly and more accurately, a change which would have the effect of reducing the workers' pay. For half the subjects this request involved a coercive influence attempt because it was accompanied by a threat of a fine for noncompliance. Both coercion and legitimacy led to increased conformity to the supervisor as evidenced by the number of pieces cut. However, legitimacy produced private as well as public compliance; coercion led to conformity only in behavior which was observable to the agent. With coercion, there was a discrepancy between what the "worker" did and what she felt she should do, accompanied by a show of hostility. There was also greater attraction to the legitimate supervisor than to the coercive supervisor (Raven & French, 1950). Additional research indicates that coercion may not lead to personal rejection of the supervisor provided the worker sees coercion as part of the legitimate role of the supervisor (French, Morrison, & Levinger, 1960).

Expertness and Reference. Subjects participating in groups of four attempted to "receive" extra-sensory images which, presumably, were being sent by a "sender" in another room. They were to indicate whether or not they had received the image by pressing an appropriate key. Subjects were more likely to report receiving ESP images when they had been led to believe that the other members in their group

had reported reception, as compared to a control condition in which they were given no information about the responses of their co-participants. Furthermore, in the former condition they were more likely to believe in the existence of extra-sensory perception, even to the extent of giving vivid post-experimental descriptions of the images which they had received (though, in fact, there was no "sender" involved at all). In a second study, all subjects were given the impression that their co-participants had received images. However, the perceptual ability attributed to the co-participants was varied. Some subjects were told that their co-participants had been tested and found to have very keen perceptual ability; some were led to believe that the other three were only slightly more perceptive than the average college student. It was expected that both referent and expert power would be related to attributed ability. Expert influence should have a strong effect on private beliefs, and, as predicted, at the close of the experiment subjects were most likely to believe in ESP if the reported reception was made by co-participants with high perceptual ability. However, referent influence should operate on reported reception, and subjects were most likely to use the "slightly above average" subjects as a basis for comparison. When co-participants were expert perceivers, their reported reception led the subjects to believe more strongly in ESP, but the subjects were unconcerned about their inability to see what the co-participant saw and they were not so likely to report reception. When the co-participants were average students, the subjects were more inclined to report reception like that of their associates, but subjects were not so likely to increase their belief in ESP (Raven, Mansson, & Anthony, 1962).

Which type of social influence is most effective?

In a typical influence situation several different sources of power may be operating. Moreover, the influencing agent often may choose from among rival sources. The doctor may stress his legitimate role as doctor and stress the "fact" that a patient must obey his doctor; he may try to speak his patient's language and develop a friendly relationship with his patient which will give him referent power; he may emphasize his training and line his office with medical books, journals, and diplomas in order to establish his expert power; he may use approval and disapproval as personal reward and personal coercion, or threaten the patient with loss of medical compensation; or he may carefully explain to the patient the nature of his illness and the reason for the prescribed exercises or medication (informational influence). The question arises as to which source of influence is most effective.

The agent will want to be certain that his chosen source of power is within his domain. The doctor will not attempt to exert expert influence if his patient happens to be another doctor whose training is equivalent to his own. In that event, he may rely upon legitimacy or informational power.

Private influence would seem to be less costly than public-dependent influence since it does not require continual surveillance or the resources which are necessary for the administration of reward and punishment. It is not surprising that prominent figures in history, having assumed political power by force, go to great lengths to establish their legitimacy by carefully tracing their regal lineage or by conducting rigged elections.

Informational influence appears to be the most stable, and it fits conveniently into our modern day value system regarding individual freedom of choice. For this reason it has received considerable stress in modern educational circles. However,

Informational influence may not be feasible until the influencee has acquired an appropriate body of knowledge. In the early stages of a calculus course it may be necessary for the teacher to use expert power, asking the students to memorize certain formulae on the basis of the teacher's superior knowledge. An understanding of the bases for these formulae may not come until much later. Military officers, realizing that the press of battle might lead to catastrophe if soldiers were to expect a complete explanation of every order, go to great lengths to establish an expectation of legitimate power over informational ("Ours is not to reason why. . ."), and keep coercive power in the background just in case.

Coercive power and manipulation both run sharply counter to our value system, yet change is crucial, as is probably the case with respect to civil rights, and where all other sources have proven ineffective, there may be no alternative. In these cases it is well to remember that if we also wish to obtain secondary independent change, we should utilize a degree of coercion which is just sufficient to bring about compliance. A "just sufficient" level of coercion is likely to create dissonance after compliance, and to induce subsequent change in attitude (Festinger, 1957).

Personality and cultural factors also help to determine the effectiveness of the source of influence. For example, persons with a high need for affiliation are especially susceptible to referent influence and personal reward (Becker & Carroll, 1962). There is also evidence that the power preferences of parents are adopted by their children (Mussen & Kagan, 1953). A cross-cultural experiment has suggested that Norwegian college students are more susceptible to several forms of social influence than are their French contemporaries (Milgram, 1961).

In a study in a large public mental hospital, members of the nursing service were presented with a problem regarding a patient who habitually slept during the day and disturbed the ward at night. They were asked to indicate the method they would employ to alter this habit. Most reported that they would use informational influence ("explain the reasons for changing the patient's sleeping habits"). The next most popular choice was "benevolent manipulation"--"Figure out some ways to keep him busy during the day so he will want to sleep at night." Few considered the use of legitimate power, reward power, or coercion. Coercion was considered to involve the most effort. Benevolent manipulation was considered most effective, but rated as involving too much work and trouble (Rosenberg & Pearlman, 1962).

Clearly more research is needed regarding power preferences in varying situations and cultures, and particularly on the conditions under which one type of power will be more effective than another.

Summary

We have examined six types of social power, classified according to their sources. Informational influence, arising from the content of a communication, becomes independent of the influencing agent, but depends upon cognitive changes in the influencee. Coercion and reward lead to influence which is continually dependent upon the agent, and specifically dependent upon his ability to monitor the influencee's responses. Expertness, reference, and legitimacy result in influence which is also dependent upon the agent, but the agent need not exercise continuous surveillance over the influencee.

Power was defined as potential influence. Influence may be positive or negative, depending upon whether its effects are congruent or opposite to the intentions of the influencing agent. Secondary influences may occur when the exercise of one type of influence creates the conditions which permit another type of influence to

operate. This is especially likely to happen when the first influence attempts lead the influencee to experience dissonance or to alter his perceptions. Manipulation may be viewed as a special case of secondary influence in which the agent's intentions are disguised and he achieves his end by creating perceptions or attitudes which gave him a new basis for power.

Several sources of power may be operating simultaneously, or an agent may have a choice of sources. Existing evidence does not permit us to make very many confident statements about the relative effects of various sources, but the studies cited in this article indicate that this problem is one which can be subjected to careful research. Future investigations should reveal many relationships which are of importance to an understanding of social behavior.

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