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A Subtle Source of Power: The Effect of Having an Expectation on Anticipated Interpersonal Power

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Abstract

In 2 studies, the authors tested the hypothesis that having information about another person can be a source of power in interpersonal interactions. In Study 1, the authors randomized participants to receive an expectation about an interaction partner, and the expectation provided an informational advantage for some participants but not for others. Participants with an advantage reported higher perceptions of power than did those who had information that did not confer an advantage; however, the effect was isolated to feelings of informational power. In Study 2, the authors examined whether the effect extended to different types of power when the information did not provide an explicit advantage. In this case, participants who received a more ambiguous expectation reported more diffuse feelings of power. The authors discuss implications for understanding the dynamics of power in social interactions.

Keywords

expectations; power; social information; social interactions

Interpersonal interactions often occur in a context in which at least one of the participants in the interaction has an expectation about the other. For example, a person may go on a date having heard from friends or colleagues that the date is with someone who is outgoing, intelligent, and attractive. Similarly, an employer typically may not interview a candidate for a job until the candidate's resume and references have been thoroughly examined, giving the interviewer a rich source of expectations about the candidate's attributes.

These expectations can influence the subsequent interaction in a variety of ways. For example, the types of information that individuals choose to gather about another person can be influenced by their expectations (Snyder & Swann, 1978a, 1978b). Moreover, expectations influence what information is used to make decisions about the person (Snyder & Cantor, 1979) and is subsequently recalled (Darley & Gross, 1983; Snyder & Uranowitz, 1978). Furthermore, expectations may lead people to alter their interaction behaviors in ways guided

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by the content of their expectations (Skrypnik & Snyder, 1982; Word, Zanna, & Cooper, 1974; Zanna & Pack, 1975). Last, having an expectation about another person can lead to behavioral confirmation by influencing the course of social interaction such that the other person confirms the expectation (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Snyder, Tanke, & Berscheid, 1977). These and related effects of expectations have been demonstrated in a number of domains, including teachers' expectations of students (Rosenthal & Jacobson), interviewers' expectations of employees (Word et al.), expectations of administrators in eyewitness lineups (Garrioch & Brimacombe, 2001), parents' expectations of children's problem behavior (Madon, Willard, Guyl, Trudeau, & Spoth, 2006), and more general expectations about a person with whom one interacts (Snyder & Swann, 1978a, 1978b; Snyder, Tanke, & Berscheid).

Why do expectations have such a striking influence on the dynamics of social interaction? There are likely to be multiple answers to this question in a phenomenon as multifaceted as interpersonal interaction. In this article, we explore the possible relation between having an expectation about an interaction partner and feeling interpersonal power. Because interpersonal power is associated with how expectations influence interactions (e.g., Copeland, 1993; Fiske, 1993), if expectations and feelings of power are related, the possession of an expectation by a participant in an interaction may influence power dynamics in ways that determine how expectations affect the interaction. Such an explanation for the power of expectations is consistent with two important bodies of literature: studies of the role of information as a source of power and examinations of the influence of power on the course and outcomes of interactions.

Power and Expectation Effects

By definition, expectations provide an individual with information about another person and, because of the interpersonal interaction context, that information is often seen as useful when interacting with that person. Thus, having information can be a source of power, increasing an individual's perceived ability to exert control and influence situations. Informational power occurs when one person has relevant and useful information that another does not; therefore, that person has control over whether that information is shared with the other person (Beier & Stern, 1969; Eyuboglu & Atac, 1991; Raven, 1965, 1992, 1993).

Most discussions of informational power explicitly invoke a change in behavior on the part of the low-power person because of the high-power person's information. The low-power person behaves differently, adopts a new position or attitude, or makes alterations to their cognitive and behavioral patterns because of the information. In other words, conceptualization of informational power has typically looked at how a person having information influences another person (the low-power person) with whom he or she interacts.

In the present study, we focus on a related but distinct question: What effect does having information have on the person who possesses the information? Because the focus of informational power theorizing has typically been on behavior change in the person without relevant information, little focus has been placed on the thoughts and behaviors of the high-power person. It has been argued that because informational power comes from the nature of the information itself, focusing on the person who holds that information is not particularly important (Raven, 1992, p. 232). However, it may be the case that the thoughts and behaviors of the person with the information play a more active role in the influence of informational power (for a demonstration of the importance of awareness of the high-power person, see Harris, Lightner, & Manolis, 1998). In fact, one could argue that having an expectation (and having other relevant sources of information) gives the person with that information a feeling of power that she or he may not otherwise have. To the extent that people who hold the expectation feel that knowledge is power, possessing information about the interaction partner

may lead to the feeling that they now have more information than they did when entering the interaction and are better able to control and take advantage of the interaction. In this case, the expectation itself may serve as a means of increasing a person's sense of power, thus shifting the power dynamics of the interaction.

The notion that a priori knowledge about an interaction partner may lead to information-based power becomes more intriguing when one considers the effects of power on interpersonal interactions. Many studies of interpersonal expectations use scenarios that may naturally confer relatively higher power on at least one of the participants. For example, in interview settings (such as the one investigated by Word et al., 1974), interviewers have a great deal of power over those being interviewed, as they have the power to ask questions, thereby controlling the direction of the interview, and to make decisions on the basis of the interview that control the fate of the interviewee. Similarly, in school settings (such as that studied by Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968), teachers are almost universally in a high-power position relative to their students. Also, in professional interactions between therapists and their clients (such as those examined by Copeland & Snyder, 1995; Harris & Rosenthal, 1986), therapists typically have greater power and control over the counseling interaction than do their clients.

In addition to the proposition that settings can confer power, another line of research suggests that power may be a critical moderator of how expectations influence the events of social interactions. At a cognitive level, power differences influence how individuals attend to and process information about an interaction partner. For example, individuals are more likely to attend to individuating information about others when they are lower in power and are thus dependent on the other person (e.g., Erber & Fiske, 1984), and the expectations of those high in power are more likely to drive the interaction dynamic (Major & O'Brien, 2005). Furthermore, it has been argued that a high-power person will typically use stereotypes or other expectation-based information about a lower-power interaction partner, either because they lack the motivation to process information in a more effortful, individuating manner or because they actively wish to maintain the power dynamic (Claire & Fiske, 1998; for evidence that this effect depends on situational constraints and the nature of the information conveyed by the expectation, see Vescio, Snyder, & Butz, 2003). Moreover, in the case of high-power individuals, the influences of the power dynamics tend to operate in ways that make expectations more likely to influence the course and outcomes of the interaction. For example, Copeland (1993) demonstrated that in social interactions, in which the holders of expectations had relatively high power by virtue of their roles as decision makers who influenced the outcomes of their interaction partners, they treated the targets of their expectations in ways that elicited confirmation for those expectations. In contrast, when the holders of expectations lacked power, they did not elicit confirmation for their expectations (for a contrasting view, see Overbeck & Park, 2001).

Testing the Ability of Expectations to Provide a Feeling of Power

The literature on power and expectations has demonstrated that explicitly providing a person with power over another person influences the ways in which expectations function and influence the outcomes of the interaction. However, what is not addressed in previous studies is, again, the following question: Does the knowledge provided by an expectation itself provide a feeling of power? In other words, does feeling powerful explicitly require that one knows one has power, or can knowing that one has information indirectly create feelings of power? Given the ubiquity of expectations about others in social life and the multifaceted effects of expectations on interaction outcomes, examining this question may significantly broaden researchers' understanding of when and why expectations influence interactions. To examine the relation between expectations and power, we conducted two studies that examined the

effects that giving a person an expectation about a potential interaction partner has on that person's feelings of power in an interaction.

STUDY 1

When people speak colloquially about power, they often speak of it in relative terms. It is common to say that one person has power over another person or that someone is a person of higher or lower power. Most social psychological definitions of power follow this focus on relative advantage, defining power as the ability (or potential ability) to influence or control another person (e.g., Fiske, 1993; French & Raven, 1959). Given the importance of relative advantage to many conceptualizations of power, in Study 1, we examined the effects of expectations on feelings of power when the expectation confers a feeling of relative advantage over one's interaction partner. To do this, we first gave participants an expectation about a person with whom they anticipated interacting using a well-validated procedure borrowed from the behavioral confirmation literature (e.g., Snyder & Stukas, 1999) in which the participant is given information about the person's personality. Numerous studies have shown that this type of manipulation effectively changes the expectation holder's beliefs about the other person's personality and alters the course of the interaction in ways that lead to behavioral confirmation (e.g., Copeland & Snyder, 1995; Snyder & Swann, 1978b; Stukas & Snyder, 2002). We then explicitly told some participants that their interaction partner did not have the information they had (thereby creating a condition of informational advantage), whereas we told other participants that they and their partner had the same information (thereby providing them with information but no advantage). After providing the participants with the expectation about the purported interaction partner, we assessed how that expectation influenced the participants' feelings of power.

Method

Overview—Participants were told that they would have an initial introductory conversation with another person with whom they were previously unacquainted. Participants in the control condition were given no expectation about their partner. In the other conditions, participants were lead to believe they would be interacting with either an extravert or introvert. Orthogonal to the content of the expectation, we manipulated perceived informational advantage. Some participants were told that the information they were given was not provided to their partner, whereas others were told that their interaction partners would also receive information about them. Therefore, the study was a completely randomized 2 (Information: advantage vs. no advantage) $\times$ 2 (Expectation Type: extravert vs. introvert) factorial design with an additional control group. After the manipulation, participants completed a questionnaire that included items measuring perceptions of power and motivations.

Participants—In all, 113 undergraduates at the University of Minnesota participated in this study in exchange for extra course credit. We excluded data from participants who expressed suspicion about the expectation manipulation ($n = 7$) from analyses, leaving a final sample of 106 participants (81 women, 25 men). The mean age of participants was 19.83 years ($SD = 3.34$ years, range 18–46 years), and most of the participants were Caucasian (73%).

Procedure—We told participants that they would have a conversation with another student and that the conversation would occur through an intercom system rather than face-to-face. Functioning headphones and a microphone were placed on a table in the room to maximize the believability of the cover story. To avoid potential feelings of power because of anticipating a cross-sex interaction, all participants were led to believe they would interact with a person of their same sex: Women were told they would be interacting with “Kristen,” and men were told they would be interacting with “Dave.”

In all conditions except the control condition, participants completed an 11-item extraversion scale. While participants completed the scale, the experimenter left the room, ostensibly to allow the partner to complete the same scale. After 3 min, the experimenter returned, holding a scale ostensibly completed by the partner. The experimenter told those in the control condition that they would be having a conversation, but they did not complete the measure.

Participants in the informational-advantage conditions were handed the scale and told that, by virtue of random assignment, they were allowed to see their partner's scale, but that their partner would not see the scale the participant had just completed. In the no-advantage conditions, participants were also shown the scale ostensibly completed by their interaction partner but were explicitly told that the partner would see the scale they had just completed. In both cases, we varied answers on the partner's purported scale to create either an introvert or an extravert expectation.

All participants then completed a questionnaire that included measures of power, motivations, and manipulation checks. In the informational-advantage conditions, the experimenter purposefully left the participants' completed extra-version scale in the room to assure the participants that their partner would not see it, whereas in the no-advantage conditions, the experimenter removed the participants' completed extraversion scale from the room, ostensibly to show it to their partner. After 10 min, the experimenter returned to the room, collected the questionnaire, and informed participants that they would not be having a conversation. Participants were then fully debriefed.

Measures

Informational-advantage manipulation check: Two items assessed the amount of information participants had about their partners: "I have information about my partner that he or she doesn't have about me" and "I know more about my partner than he or she knows about me." Participants reported the extent to which they agreed with each statement using a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*completely agree*). The mean of these two items ($\alpha = .96$) served as a measure of perceived informational advantage.

Expectation content manipulation check: Participants rated their purported partners on an 11-item extraversion scale. Each item consisted of a 7-point semantic differential with endpoints of descriptive adjectives differentiating introverts from extraverts (e.g., unsociable, sociable; socially unskilled, socially skilled). We reversed scored five items so that for all items, higher scores indicated greater extraversion. The mean of the 11 items served as the manipulation-check measure for expectations ($\alpha = .95$).

Dependent measure of perceived power: Although several researchers have developed measures of bases of power in employment settings (e.g., Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1989; Nestler, Aguinis, Quigley, Lee, & Tedeschi, 1999; Raven, Schwarzwald, & Koslowsky, 1998), to our knowledge, there is not an extant closed-ended, quantitative measure of social power specifically applicable to interpersonal conversations of the type anticipated by participants in the present study. Therefore, we developed an assessment of perceived interpersonal power guided by French and Raven's (1959; Raven, 1992) typology. Participants rated the extent of their agreement with 18 items assessing interpersonal power using 7-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*completely agree*).

Because power is widely held to be a multidimensional construct (e.g., French & Raven, 1959), we conducted an exploratory factor analysis to examine the underlying structure of the items. We conducted extraction using the principal axis factoring method and, given the likely covariance across types of power, we selected an oblique rotation using oblimin techniques. Five factors emerged with eigenvalues greater than 1.0; collectively, these five factors

accounted for 66.7% of the variance. One item loaded equally on two factors. Because it did not clearly fall onto a single factor, we dropped it from the final measure.

Two of the factors matched directly to French and Raven's (1959) taxonomy of bases of power: One factor consisted of three items assessing informational power (e.g., "Knowing what I know about my partner may allow me to take charge of the interaction"; $\alpha = .72$), whereas a second factor consisting of two items tapped into feelings of coercive power (e.g., "I could make the interaction difficult for my partner"; $\alpha = .83$). A third factor consisting of seven items tapped into the ability to successfully influence the partner (e.g., "I could influence my partner by being able to take control of the conversation"; $\alpha = .86$). A fourth factor containing two items assessed feelings of power because of social or interaction skills (e.g., "I am better at 'getting acquainted' conversations than my partner is"; $\alpha = .87$). Last, a fifth factor consisted of three items assessing feelings of power because of expectations of the partner's interest and deference in the interaction (e.g., "My partner will be more interested in further interaction with me than I will be with him or her"; $\alpha = .75$). Table 1 shows a complete set of items with factor loadings.

To assess the validity of the five subscales derived from the factor analysis as measures of power, we examined how they related to a variable known to be associated with levels of interpersonal power. Previous work has shown that people in positions of power are more likely to be motivated to get to know, rather than get along with, the other person (Fiske, 1993; Snyder & Haugen, 1994, 1995). Thus, if our measure tapped perceived interpersonal power, it should be associated with people's get-to-know motives. Participants completed a six-item measure of their motivation to get to know their interaction partner (e.g., "I want to get a clear idea of who my partner is"; $\alpha = .55$). To test the relation between the five power subscales and the get-to-know motivation as converging validity evidence for the power measure, we examined the correlation between get-to-know motives and each subscale. There was a significant and positive relation with get-to-know motivations for all of the subscales, $r_s(106) = .21-.44$, all $p_s < .05$, except Coercive power, $r(106) = .06$, $p = .53$. Table 2 shows the zero-order correlations among the power subscales, get-to-know motivations, and two manipulation checks.

Given this factor structure and evidence for validity, we computed scores for each subscale of power by taking the means of the items loading on that factor subscale. We used these subscale scores in all reported analyses.

Results

Manipulation Checks

Informational advantage: Participants in the two informational-advantage conditions reported having more information about their partner ($M = 6.10$, $SD = 1.10$) relative to those in the no-advantage conditions ($M = 1.57$, $SD = 1.11$), $F(1, 80) = 346.63$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .81$. This main effect was not qualified by an interaction between information advantage and expectation content, nor was there a main effect for expectation type, both $F_s(1, 80) < 1.00$, $p_s > .40$.

Expectation content: Participants in the extravert expectation conditions expected their partner to be more extraverted ($M = 5.73$, $SD = .64$) than did those led to believe they would interact with an introvert ($M = 3.48$, $SD = .69$), $F(1, 80) = 237.27$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .75$. There was neither a qualifying interaction nor a main effect of informational advantage, both $F_s(1, 80) < 1.00$, $p_s > .50$.

Effect of Informational Advantage on Power—Our key question was whether perceptions of power differed between conditions in which participants had an informational

advantage versus those in the information equivalent or control condition. To examine this question, we combined the two informational-advantage conditions into a single informational-advantage group and the two no-advantage conditions into a no-advantage group. Comparisons of the introversion- and extraversion-expectation groups in these two conditions revealed no significant differences in overall perceptions of power, both $F_s(1, 80) < 3.20$, $p_s = .09$. We then compared the feelings of interpersonal power experienced by those in the informational-advantage group, the no-advantage group, and the control group by submitting the five power subscales to a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). This analysis strategy allowed us to examine whether having an informational advantage influences overall feelings of power and whether any influence of information differs across the five subscales.

The groups differed in their overall perceived interpersonal power, Wilk's $\lambda F(10, 196) = 6.74$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .26$. To further examine the nature of this effect, we conducted follow-up tests separately comparing the three groups to see which ones differed significantly from the others on overall perceptions of power. Because this process involved multiple comparisons, we followed the Bonferroni convention of setting the alpha for the follow-up tests at $0.05/3$ comparisons = 0.016. Results of the follow-up analyses revealed that participants in the informational-advantage condition had higher perceptions of overall power ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.75$) than did participants in the control condition ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 0.87$), $F(1, 60) = 10.56$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = .15$. But these perceptions were not higher than those in the no-informational-advantage condition ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.78$), $F(1, 82) = 4.52$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2 = .05$.¹ Moreover, participants in the no-advantage condition did not differ in overall perceptions of power from those in the control condition, $F(1, 64) = 2.39$, $p = .13$.

To understand the effect of informational advantage on the subscales of power, we examined the univariate analyses from the MANOVA. These analyses revealed that the effect of informational advantage was significant only for informational power, $F(2, 102) = 30.46$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .37$; it did not meet statistical significance for the other four subscales, F_s range from 1.44 to 0.58, p_s range from .24 to .56. Figure 1 shows the means for each of the subscales of the power measure.

Discussion

The results of Study 1 demonstrate the power of expectations to induce feelings of interpersonal power. Having an expectation that confers an informational advantage leads one to have stronger feelings of power than when no expectation is held. Given that power is typically thought of as an explicitly held or conferred phenomenon (e.g., by virtue of holding a position or occupying a role, possessing material resources, displaying one's ability to influence another), this finding suggests that power can also be conferred in more subtle and implicit ways. In the context of interpersonal interactions, which are often characterized by one person having an expectation about another, the findings suggest that power may be more ubiquitous than one might imagine.

However, the effect of having an informational advantage was limited to feelings of informational power, as there were no effects in the types of power not directly related to having information. Why might this be the case? One possibility is that, because the relative-advantage manipulation was directly tied to the expectation information provided, the manipulation may have narrowly focused attention on ways in which the information provided by the expectation related to feelings of power, thus making informational power particularly salient in this context. Although the items assessing informational power tapped into the power or influence

¹The difference in overall perceptions of power between people in the informational-advantage condition and those in the no-advantage condition would be statistically significant without the Bonferroni correction.

stemming from possessing the information rather than just assessing the knowledge of possessing information (e.g., I could influence my partner because I know things about my partner that he or she doesn't know about me), because we only found the effects for informational power, it could be concluded that the results were simply a reflection of knowing that one has information (i.e., an additional manipulation check) rather than demonstrating an actual change in feelings of power. But, if the effect of an expectation were to extend beyond informational power to other bases of power, this would suggest that having an expectation has a broader, more generalized effect on people's feelings of power. A second study examined the possibility that simply giving people more ambiguous information about an anticipated interaction partner (i.e., information that does not convey having an advantage) creates more diffuse feelings of power.

STUDY 2

Method

Overview—As in Study 1, participants were told that they would have an initial introductory conversation with another person with whom they were previously unacquainted. In a completely randomized experimental design, participants in two expectation conditions were led to believe that their conversation partner was either introverted or extraverted, whereas participants in a no-expectation control condition received no such expectation. However, unlike Study 1, participants were not given any indication as to whether the information they had been given provided them with any type of advantage. All participants then completed the primary dependent measure, an assessment of their perceived power.

Participants—In all, 99 undergraduates at the University of Minnesota participated in the study in exchange for extra course credit. We randomly assigned participants to one of three conditions: extravert expectation, introvert expectation, or no expectation. Because 6 participants reported suspicion during debriefing, we excluded their data from all analyses, leaving a final sample of 93 participants (72 women, 21 men).² The mean age of participants was 20.01 years ($SD = 2.00$ years, range 17–31 years), and most of the participants were Caucasian (71%).

Procedure—As in Study 1, the experimenter told participants that they would have a conversation with another student that would occur through an intercom system rather than face-to-face. Again, functioning headphones and a microphone were placed on a table in the room to maximize the believability of the cover story, and all participants were led to believe that their interaction partner was of their sex: Women were told they would be interacting with “Kristen,” and men were told they would be interacting with “Dave.”

Next, we told participants in the two expectation conditions that their interaction partner had completed a personality questionnaire earlier in the semester. The experimenter told participants in the extravert-expectation condition that on the basis of the responses provided earlier by “Kristen” [“Dave”], “it appears that she [he] is friendly, energetic, and outgoing. In other words, she's [he's] rather extraverted.” In the introvert-expectation condition, the experimenter told participants, “It appears that she [he] is quiet, shy, and withdrawn. In other words, she's [he's] rather introverted.” No information was provided to participants in the no-expectation condition.

²We found that men reported greater perceptions of power than did women. However, there was not a significant interaction between sex and expectation type; thus, we will not further address sex.

The experimenter then left the room, ostensibly to get Kristen (or Dave) prepared for the conversation and to make sure the intercom equipment functioned properly. Before leaving the room, the experimenter gave participants a questionnaire that included items measuring perceptions of power and manipulation checks. After 10 min, the experimenter returned to the room, collected the questionnaire, and informed participants that they would not be having a conversation. Participants were then fully debriefed.

Measures

Perceived information manipulation check: Participants completed five items to assess perceived knowledge about their partner (e.g., “I know something about what kind of person my partner is”). Participants reported the extent to which they agreed with each statement using a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*completely agree*). The mean of the items served as the manipulation check of perceived information about the interaction partner ($\alpha = .88$).

Expectation content manipulation check: To assess the content of participants’ expectations, we used the 11-item extraversion scale ($\alpha = .92$) from Study 1.

Power measure: We ran a principal axis, oblimin factor analysis on the 18-item power scale to verify the factor structure. In this case, the analysis revealed four factors that accounted for 69.81% of the variance in scores. However, the four-factor structure was quite similar to the five-factor structure reported in Study 1. The items that loaded on the informational power, coercive power, and influence factors were exactly the same. However, the items that loaded on to separate *social or interaction skills* and *partner’s interest and deference* factors in Study 1 loaded on to the same factor in this analysis. Moreover, the same item that was dropped from the final measure in Study 1 again loaded equally on two factors and did not clearly fall onto a single factor; thus, it was dropped from the final measure. Given the similarities between the two factor patterns, the conceptual interpretation of the dimensions of power did not seem to change. Therefore, we decided to use the four-factor solution in this study to create the subscales of the power measure.³ As with Study 1, each of the subscales showed adequate reliability (α s range .86–.88). Also, all four subscales were significantly related to get-to-know motivations, $r(93) = .21-.47$, $ps < .05$. Table 3 shows the zero-order correlations among the power subscales, get-to-know motivations, and the two manipulation checks.

Results

Manipulation Checks

Perceived information: Participants in the two expectation conditions reported having more information about their partners (extravert expectation, $M = 4.02$, $SD = 1.27$; introvert expectation, $M = 3.70$, $SD = 1.00$) than did those in the no-expectation condition ($M = 1.23$, $SD = 0.48$), $F(2, 90) = 76.16$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .63$. Follow-up comparisons using the Bonferroni technique to control for multiple comparisons revealed that the means in both expectation conditions were significantly greater than in the control condition, $F_s(1, 60) > 130.80$, $ps < .001$, $\eta^2_s > .69$, but did not differ from one another, $F(1, 60) = 1.25$, $p = .27$.

Expectation content: Participants in the extravert-expectation condition expected their interaction partners to be more extraverted ($M = 5.57$, $SD = 1.00$) than did those in the no-expectation condition ($M = 4.51$, $SD = .94$), and those in the introvert-expectation condition expected their interaction partners to be less extraverted ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.51$), $F(2, 90) =$

³We reran the analyses in Study 1 using the four subscales of power that were derived from this analysis rather than the five that were reported. The results did not change.

40.24, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .47$. Multiple comparisons using the Bonferroni technique confirmed that the means in all three conditions significantly differed from one another, $F_s(1, 60) > 18.41$, $p_s < .001$, $\eta^2_s > .24$.

Effect of Expectations on Feelings of Power—The following was the critical question we sought to answer: Does being given an expectation about one's interaction partner that does not convey an explicit advantage in information lead to more diffuse feelings of power in the interaction? To answer this question, we compared the feelings of interpersonal power experienced by those in the extravert-expectation group, the introvert-expectation group, and the control group by submitting the four power subscales to a MANOVA. This analysis strategy allowed us to examine whether having an expectation influences overall feelings of power and whether the influence of having an expectation is diffuse across the four subscales of power.

The groups differed in their overall perceived interpersonal power, Wilk's λ $F(8, 174) = 10.12$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .32$. Follow-up analyses using a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons showed that the combination of the two expectation groups had higher feelings of overall power than did the no-expectation group, $F(1, 91) = 18.19$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .17$, but that the effect between the two expectation groups was much smaller, $F(1, 60) = 3.67$, $p = .06$, $\eta^2 = .06$.

Figure 2 shows the means for each of the four power subscales by condition. The follow-up univariate analyses from the MANOVA revealed a fairly consistent effect of expectations across informational power, social or interaction skills, and influence, $F_s(2, 90) > 4.17$, $p_s < .05$. For these three types of power, individuals in the expectation conditions had greater feelings of power than did those in the no-expectation condition: informational power, $F(1, 91) = 74.87$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .45$; influence, $F(1, 91) = 8.10$, $p = .005$, $\eta^2 = .08$; social or interaction skills, $F(1, 91) = 6.83$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .07$. For coercive power, the effect between the expectation conditions and the no-expectation condition was smaller and nonsignificant, $F(1, 91) = 2.98$, $p = .09$, $\eta^2 = .03$. The two expectation conditions (introvert vs. extravert) did not differ from one another on information, influence, or coercive power, all $F_s(1, 60) < 1.51$, $p_s > .20$. For social or interaction skills, the introvert-expectation condition reported higher levels of power relative to the extravert-expectation condition, $F(1, 60) = 10.14$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = .15$.⁴

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In two studies, we tested the hypothesis that having information about another person is a source of power in interpersonal interactions for the person with the information. In Study 1, we tested this hypothesis by providing some participants with an expectation about an anticipated interaction partner, systematically varying whether the information people were provided created an informational advantage and then asking them to report their perceptions of power while anticipating the interaction. We found that participants who had been provided an informational advantage reported feeling a greater sense of power than did those who had not been provided an expectation, but this effect was limited to informational power.

In Study 2, we extended these findings by looking at the diffusion of feelings of power that may be created by more ambiguous information. We found that those participants who were simply given information about an anticipated interaction partner reported feeling a greater sense of power than did those who were given no information. Moreover, although the effect on informational power was the strongest, it was not limited to perceptions of informational power. Simply having information that did not convey any type of advantage led people to also perceive a greater sense of power because of their social or interaction skills and ability to

⁴It is possible that this effect was because of expectations participants may have derived from stereotypes about how extraverts and introverts behave in social interactions.

influence their partner. Taken together, the primary findings from both studies suggest that simply having information about another person is enough to evoke feelings of power in the person who has the information.

In addition, the fact that the effect of expectations on power did not extend to coercive power in either study also reflects an interesting feature of the nature of interpersonal power. Because power is multidimensional, there may be situational or personal differences in which bases of power are most applicable in particular circumstances or for particular people. In our situation, it was not surprising that provision of information created informational power and, more indirectly, feelings of influence and social-skills-based power. Because the source and nature of coercive power is different, it was not as applicable in this situation, and therefore not affected by the manipulation.

Why might having information lead to feelings of power even in the absence of overt conferral of such interpersonal power? One possibility is that when people possess information about others, they may seek out explanations for why they have it. Perhaps a process akin to self-perception (Bem, 1967) takes place, and individuals use the concrete information about possession of information to make direct inferences about the more abstract implications of interpersonal power (e.g., “I have this information about my partner, so I must have some power in this interaction”). Another possibility stems from studies arguing that part of the experience of power is possessing the resources necessary to take action: High-power people are frequently perceived as being more agentic by others (Conway, Pizzamiglio, & Mount, 1996; Eagly & Steffen, 1984) and they feel more able to take action (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003). Moreover, high-power individuals are likely to take action in a variety of situations (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003). Given these demonstrated links, it may be the case that factors that increase either the likelihood of being able to take action or behave agentically (such as having information with which to guide a conversation) activate feelings of power.

Implications

How might our findings help to further researchers’ understanding of the nature of power and dynamics of interpersonal interactions, particularly expectation effects? One implication is that our findings suggest that the mechanisms of power may lead to changes in perception on the part of both the low-power and the high-power person. Looking at French and Raven’s bases of power (1959; Raven, 1992), it could be argued that some of their bases of power are conceptualized in ways that focus on the high-power person’s perceptions of power. For example, reward power requires the high-power person’s acknowledgement of having a potential reward and willingness to provide or withhold that reward. Coercive power and, to an extent, expert power, also fall into this category, although the low-power person’s perceptions of the value of the reward or the certainty of the person’s expertise also matter. However, other bases of power (specifically, informational, legitimate, and referent power) have been traditionally conceptualized as based more on the low-power person’s perceptions of the high-power person’s degree of power and potential influence. In fact, Raven (1992) argued that the influence potential of informational power does not require action on the part of the high-power person; that is, the “agent [of power] ... become[s] inconsequential” (p. 232).

In contrast to such theorizing, our findings suggest that the person with information (in our study, the expectation about another) may play a more active role in the process. The mere state of having information creates feelings of greater power and thus perceptions of control over interactions with the other, perhaps resulting, in part, from satisfying people’s need to know and control their environment (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 2000; Maslow, 1943). Because such senses of power and control can substantially alter both a person’s motivations and behaviors in an interaction (Copeland, 1994; Fiske, 1993), the findings suggest that understanding both

how informational power comes about in its own right and influences the dynamics of interactions requires a more active focus on how having information affects the person with that information. For example, the possibility that people may perceive the information as a means to control the consequences of their social interactions (see Goltz, 2003; Goltz & Hietapelto, 2002; Kipnis, 1976) could be explored in future investigations. From an applied perspective, expectations and the consequent sense of power that they can and do create may play an important role in creating and solidifying differences in power between individuals and groups in society, specifically contributing to the assignment of individuals and groups who are the targets of negative, stigmatizing beliefs and expectations to positions of lesser power in society.

In addition to their implications for understanding the nature of power itself, our findings also have potential implications for understanding how power influences the dynamics of social interactions. Power has been shown to change the motivations individuals have when engaging in interactions (Copeland, 1993, 1994; Fiske & Depret, 1996) and, ultimately, the likelihood of behavioral confirmation effects occurring during those interactions (Copeland, 1994). Previous researchers have conceptualized and operationalized power in overt ways (e.g., teacher–student, counselor–client, manager–subordinate) in which people in positions of power have different motivations for the interactions, and power makes behavioral confirmation of expectations about a low-power person more likely.

In the context of such concerns about the effects of power on social interaction, our findings suggest that the ways in which power can influence such interactions may be subtler than the ways in which researchers have traditionally conceptualized and operationalized power. In our studies, we never directly manipulated positions of power. We never told participants that they were in a high-power position, made them feel superior to their hypothetical interaction partner, or gave them any means of directly controlling the outcomes of that partner. Rather, we gave participants in the expectation condition something that at face value seems minor: a single expectation about their partner. Yet, that subtle piece of knowledge had a strong influence on the participants in the expectation conditions of our studies. Most directly, it led them to feel powerful in a way that participants in the no-expectation condition did not: Having information created a feeling of having power over that partner. Although the elicitation of power from information is thought to be subtle, this finding was demonstrated in both studies using an explicit measure of power. This finding suggests that feelings of power that result from having information are conscious and strong enough to override any self-presentational concerns that may be present in reporting feelings of interpersonal power.

Considered from this perspective, our findings suggest that power may influence a much broader array of interpersonal interactions than is typically considered, an implication of considerable applied significance for the effects of expectations on power in diverse domains of individual, social, and societal functioning. In addition to the obvious situations in which one person has one or another form of power over others, any time that person perceives that they have relevant information about another person, a feeling of power may be created. Because feelings of power then lead to changes in interaction motivations and behaviors, power may more subtly influence a broader array of interactions than is often considered.

Conclusion

It is often said that knowledge is power. Our results demonstrate that this can be true in the context of interpersonal interactions. Having knowledge about an interaction partner leads to increased feelings of interpersonal power. Given the relation between power and the dynamics of interpersonal interactions, this inadvertent conferral of power through giving an expectation about an interaction partner may strongly influence the course of subsequent interactions

between the person with the expectation and the interaction partner about whom that expectation is held.

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FIGURE 1.
Mean perceived interpersonal power as a function of expectation condition for Study 1.

FIGURE 2.
Mean perceived interpersonal power as a function of expectation condition for Study 2.

TABLE 1

Power Measure Items, by Subscale Factors

Item	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
Social and interaction skills					
I am better at "getting acquainted" conversations than my partner is.	.753				
I am more socially skilled than my partner is.	.883				
Coercion					
I could make the interaction difficult for my partner.		.994			
I could make my partner feel uncomfortable during our interaction.		.705			
Influence					
I could bring things to the interaction that my partner will see as beneficial.			-.717		
I could make this interaction enjoyable for my partner.			-.739		
I could influence my partner by being able to take control of the topics of conversation.			-.453		
I could influence my partner because of the good qualities that I bring to the interaction.			-.505		
My role in the interaction gives me the opportunity to influence my partner.			-.432		
I could influence my partner because of my level of interest in further interaction with him or her.			-.425		
I could influence my partner because of my social skills.			-.563		
Informational					
Knowing what I know about my partner may allow me to take charge of the interaction.				-.608	
Knowing what I know about my partner could be useful to me in the interaction.				-.826	
I could influence my partner because I know things about my partner that he or she doesn't know about me.				-.524	
Partner's interest and deference					
My partner will be more interested in further interaction with me than I will be with him/her.					.839
My partner should defer to me in the conversation because of my role.					.502
I expect that my partner will like me more than I will like him or her.					.621

Note. For social and interaction skills, $\alpha = .87$; for coercion, $\alpha = .83$; for influence, $\alpha = .86$; for informational, $\alpha = .72$; for partner's interest and deference, $\alpha = .75$.

TABLE 2
Zero-Order Correlations Among Key Variables in Study 1

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Social or interaction skills	—							
2. Coercion	.043	—						
3. Influence	.403***	.192*	—					
4. Informational power	.327**	.233*	.434***	—				
5. Partner's interest or deference	.559***	.029	.341***	.298**	—			
6. Get-to-know motive	.209*	.062	.441***	.273**	.257**	—		
7. Informational advantage	.085	.079	.029	.533***	.161	.063	—	
8. Expectation content	.557***	-.041	-.116	-.246*	-.293***	.202*	.008	—

*
 $p < .05$.

**
 $p < .01$.

 $p < .001$.

TABLE 3
Zero-Order Correlations Among Key Variables in Study 2

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Social or interaction skills	—						
2. Coercion	.110	—					
3. Influence	.583***	.130	—				
4. Informational power	.538***	-.049	.448***	—			
5. Get-to-know motive	.418***	.206*	.470***	.338**	—		
6. Informational advantage	.281**	-.205*	.338**	.737***	.239*	—	
7. Expectation content	-.281**	-.092	-.039	.016	-.003	.094	—

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.