

# From Revolutionary Coalitions to Bilateral Deterrence: A Nonzero-Sum Approach to Social Power\*

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This chapter reviews a program of work investigating how social power, defined as a structurally based capability, affects the tactics chosen in a conflict. A nonzero-sum approach to power stipulates that the total amount of power in a relationship can have effects distinct from those of relative power or power difference. This assumption is grounded in Emerson's power dependence theory and reminiscent of Tannenbaum's concept of control. The basic ideas are that (1) higher total power in a relationship has an integrative effect on that relationship, resulting in more conciliatory and less hostile responses to conflict; and (2) larger power differences have divisive effects on a relationship, making conflict resolution less conciliatory and more hostile. Research on revolutionary coalitions, power dependence processes in bargaining, and bilateral deterrence exemplify and support the importance of the nonzero-sum approach to power.

When individuals, groups, or organizations experience a conflict of interest, they can respond in a variety of ways. One common response is to attempt to influence the other party by choosing among some set of available tactics; another is to avoid the relationship or situation in which the conflict can occur; still another is to do nothing right away except work to improve one's power position in preparation for one of the first two options. Threatening or damaging action is an example of the first option; leaving the scene, an example of the second; and forming a coalition with others, of the third. Along with a variety of other social psychologists (e.g., Deutsch, 1973; Kipnis, 1976; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1983;

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Tedeschi, Schlenker, & Bonoma, 1973), my program of research has taken the concept of power as central to understanding how actors respond to a conflict and in particular how they react to an opponent's response. This chapter reviews the conceptual odyssey of this research program (e.g., Bacharach & Lawler, 1980, 1981a; Lawler, 1975a&b, 1986, 1992).

Virtually all parts of the program—from the early research on revolutionary coalitions (Lawler, 1975) to more recent work on bilateral deterrence (Lawler, 1986)—should be interpreted as an effort to understand power processes, in particular when people use power and how they use it (see Bacharach & Lawler, 1981a). One fundamental question has consistently driven this program of work: *How does power, defined as a structurally based capability, affect the tactical use of power?* This chapter presents the abstract, theoretical position on power that has emerged in the work over the last 20 years. More specifically, it presents the theoretical framework, analyzes the central themes or theoretical propositions, and shows how these themes are stimulating work on some new issues (see also Lawler, 1992; Lawler & Ford, in press).

Broadly construed, the framework on power embedded in our work pulls together ideas, somewhat selectively, from sociology, social psychology, and the study of organizations. A few examples help set the stage for what follows. From sociological analyses, we adopt a social structural perspective on the sources of conflict (Dahrendorf, 1959). From some organizational theory, we adopt the notion that social structure is an objective, external phenomenon that has both a horizontal and vertical dimension (e.g., Blau, 1977). From Emerson's power dependence theory, we extract a nonzero-sum conception of power, which emphasizes structurally based, rather than interpersonally based, power. From social psychological research, such as that treated by Rubin and Brown (1975) and Pruitt (1981), we adopt a tactical approach to the use of power in conflict. Overall, the terms *social structure*, *power*, and *tactics* capture the theoretical content of the research program. Revolutionary coalitions and two-party bargaining have been the major substantive topics.

In this conceptual biography, I focus very heavily on the conceptual, as opposed to the empirical, side of the research program. The conceptual side of the program is treated in terms of two elements: the metatheory and the set of testable propositions or theories spawned by the metatheory. A metatheory refers to a set of fundamental assumptions that orient and shape theorizing about some phenomenon, often in subtle, nonconscious ways (Wagner & Berger, 1985). Field theory and social exchange theory are examples of basic metatheories found in the literature on power. A theory is essentially a set of abstract, testable claims or propositions about the causes or effects of a phenomenon (Wagner, 1984). Power dependence theory (Emerson 1962, 1972) is an example of a theory of power falling within a social exchange metatheory.

Metatheories are important because they define the substantive problems of theoretical interest, indicate how those problems should be investigated, and establish boundaries around the sort of theoretical solutions deemed satisfactory (Berger, Wagner, & Zelditch, 1987; Lawler & Ford, in press; Wagner, 1984).

Much can be learned by teasing out metatheories and juxtaposing them with testable parts of theorizing. We believe, along with a growing number of sociologists (e.g., Berger et al., 1987), that more explicit metatheorizing can promote better theorizing. Thus, one purpose of this chapter is to use the distinction between metatheory and theory to present and analyze my own program of work; a second purpose is to illustrate how more explicitness about metatheories might stimulate interesting and important theoretical shifts (see also Lawler & Ford, in press).

The chapter is divided into five sections, corresponding to several distinct stages of development within the theory and research program. The *first stage* consisted primarily of research on revolutionary coalitions. This work focused on the determinants of a single tactic; it was highly problem driven. The *second stage* was a series of empirical papers using power dependence theory to understand how actors evaluate and choose among a set of tactics. In this work, a revolutionary coalition is but one among a set of possible tactics suggested by power dependence theory. The *third stage* was essentially a theoretical interlude, in which Bacharach and I produced books on *Power and Politics in Organizations* (1980) and *Bargaining* (1981a). This was the point at which the metatheory crystallized, and the research became more theory driven. The *fourth stage* was to develop and test theoretical notions that relate power capability and power use. The *fifth stage* is taking the main ideas (e.g., theoretical propositions) and using them to address other issues, such as the effectiveness of unilateral initiatives in bargaining and commitment in social exchange relations.

## STAGE I: REVOLUTIONARY COALITIONS

The research on revolutionary conditions developed from the early work of Caplow (1956) and Gamson (1961) on coalition formation. The Caplow/Gamson tradition asked *which* of the possible winning coalitions will form, assuming that a coalition is virtually inevitable (see Murnighan, 1978, for a review). Our research asked a different question—namely, under what conditions will two or more subordinates in a status hierarchy mobilize a coalition against a group leader (Lawler, 1975a, 1975b, 1983; Lawler & Thompson, 1978; Lawler, Youngs, & Lesh, 1978; Michener & Lawler, 1971; Michener & Lyons, 1972). This work focused on a particular type of coalition and addressed its capacity to mobilize.

The research assumed a status hierarchy in which three or more actors work on and receive a group outcome from a collective task. The leader had the authority, legitimized on the basis of merit, to allocate group outcomes. The major focus was on the conditions determining when subordinates will engage in a collective revolt in response to an inequitable allocation of group outcomes by the leader. In this context, a series of experiments conducted from the early 1970s to the early 1980s yielded several important findings.

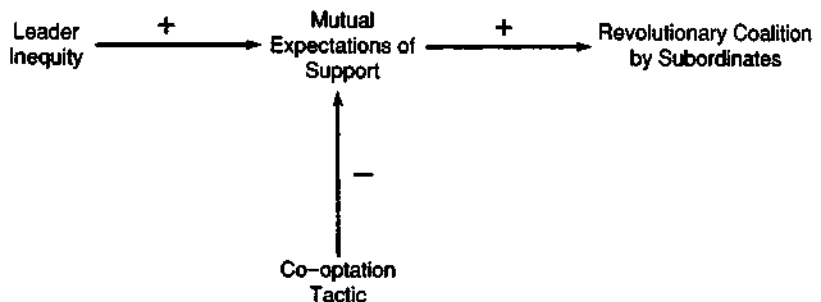
First, inequity produced revolts, not by simply generating the emotional or attitudinal responses emphasized in equity theory such as dissatisfaction or an-

ger, but by creating mutual expectations among the subordinates that they are likely to share dissatisfaction (Lawler, 1975a, 1975b). To put it another way, collective responses to inequity were mediated by expectations of mutual support. Presumably, such expectations were fostered by a "sense of common position" produced by a leader's inequitable action. The most exciting implication of these results was that expectations of support from other subordinates were actually more important than negative individual feelings or attitudes toward leaders (see especially Lawler 1975a).

The second finding was closely connected to the importance of expectations of mutual support. Specifically, we found that a leader could treat subordinates inequitably and forestall a revolt with a co-optation tactic, involving an offer to promote one of two subordinates to an intermediate position in the social structure or hierarchy (Lawler, 1983; Lawler, Youngs, & Lesh, 1978). Through a subtle process of tacit bargaining, revealed by interaction data, such an offer by the leader to one of two subordinates made the favored subordinate a bit more reluctant to form a coalition and the other disfavored subordinate more hesitant to push for a revolt in anticipation of opposition from the favored subordinate. Through such a tacit-bargaining process, inequitable reward allocations by the leader produced revolts about 20 percent of the time when such a tactic was used by the leader and roughly 80 percent of the time in the absence of a co-optation tactic (see Lawler, et al., 1978). Figure 1 summarizes the implications of the research.

Other findings of this research indicate that subordinates were more inclined toward a revolt in response to inequity if the leader was perceived as highly responsible for the inequitable allocation of group benefit (Lawler & Thompson, 1978), or if the coalition had the power to redistribute outcomes rather than simply to punish the leader (Lawler & Thompson, 1979). In addition, the co-optation tactic was effective only if it provided significant benefits to the recipient and if the promotion offer from the leader was stated in fairly definite rather than probabilistic or "maybe" terms; that is, the leader conveyed that the promotion was virtually assured if there was no coalition by subordinates (Lawler et al., 1978).

FIGURE 1 Implications of Research on Revolutionary Coalitions



Overall, the research on revolutionary coalitions produced a coherent body of findings, but not a theory. The closest this work came to a theory was the identification of three necessary conditions for a revolt: a normative or moral justification for upsetting the status hierarchy or acting contrary to it, a perception that a revolt would successfully influence or depose the leader, and an expectation that it would be possible to mobilize joint action with the other subordinates (see Lawler et al., 1978). These normative, utilitarian, and organizational factors subsumed the specific conditions found to affect the occurrence of revolts in this series of experiments.

## STAGE 2: EARLY RESEARCH ON POWER DEPENDENCE

The search for a better theory led to Emerson's (1962, 1972) power dependence notion and a related shift in the research focus. Emerson offered a concise, appealing concept of power and, more important at the time, a multidimensional conceptualization of tactics, one of which was a coalition. Emerson's theory put coalitional action in the context of other, individual-based tactics that could be available. Thus, the theory raised questions, such as when do subordinates choose a coalition from among a variety of tactics and, more generally, how do subordinates in a hierarchy choose among a range of tactics? The research agenda was expanded accordingly.

The basic principle of power dependence theory is that the power of party A is based on party B's dependence on A and vice versa. More specifically, B's dependence on A is a function of how highly B values the outcomes or benefits from the relationship with A and the availability of those outcomes in other relationships. The theory, therefore, suggests four dimensions of dependence in a dyad: the availability of alternative persons or partners to A, the value or importance that A attributes to the benefits received in the relationship with B, the availability of alternative persons or partners to B, and the value of the benefits to B. These four dimensions of dependence imply a broad set of tactics for influencing another or for improving one's power position (see Bacharach & Lawler, 1980, chap. 7; Blegen & Lawler, 1989). A revolutionary coalition, for instance, is conceptualized in this scheme as an effort to reduce the alternative sources of benefit for the other (see Emerson, 1962). Power dependence theory provides a few parsimonious ideas with broad applicability.

Bacharach and I initiated the power dependence research of the program in a series of papers on how a subordinate (employee) in conflict or disagreement with a superior (employer) evaluates and chooses among the four tactics specified by power dependence theory (Bacharach & Lawler, 1976, 1981b; Lawler & Bacharach, 1976, 1979). To address these issues, we used vignettes in which an employee of a small business store wanted a pay raise but knew the employer was against it. We investigated both the employee subjects' tendencies to use each tactic and also their expectations concerning the employer response to their attempts at influencing the decision about pay.

To make the transition from what is essentially a social structural theory to the choice of tactics, we adapted the "treatment of choice" metaphor used quite effectively by David Kipnis (1976). The resulting hypothesis was that actors would use the dimensions of dependence to identify points of strength or weakness in their own or the other's power position. Different tactics (of the four suggested) deal with or respond to different sources of strength or weakness. Actors ostensibly would attach probabilities of success to each tactic based on whether it uses a strength or mitigates a weakness (Bacharach & Lawler, 1980, 1981b; Lawler & Bacharach, 1976, 1979). For an obvious example, a threat to leave would be used more if the employee had many alternatives; similarly, a coalition would be most likely when the employer had many alternatives. In sum, this work took Kipnis's idea that an actor facing resistance from another will diagnose the reasons for the resistance and apply the "treatment" (i.e., tactic) with the highest probability of success. The prime differences are that in our approach, the *reasons* are structural, not motivational, and the *treatments* explicitly use this structure in some fashion. It is also important to note that our purpose here was to elaborate and test the implications of a particular theory, Emerson's power dependence theory, not to comprehensively identify and examine the sort of tactics used by an employee to influence an employer. In this sense, the work had and continues to have different purposes than that of Kipnis and Schmidt (1983).

The empirical results supported many of the hypotheses developed from power dependence theory. First, in a study of perceptions of power, Bacharach and Lawler (1976) found that each of the four dimensions of dependence did affect a subordinate's perceptions of self and other's power as predicted (Bacharach & Lawler, 1976). Second, in a study of how the subjective expected utility of attempting influence is affected by the power dependence relation, Lawler and Bacharach (1979) found that subordinates attached a higher subjective utility to influence when they had many alternatives and the employer had few. Third, we found that different dimensions of dependence affected different tactics—or, more precisely, each of the four tactics as a function of different dimensions of dependence. The mapping of the tactics on the dimensions of dependence, however, was not completely consistent with Emerson's (1962) version of power dependence theory.

The departure from power dependence theory took one basic form. When assessing the four tactical options suggested by the theory, actors attributed more importance to their own dependence on the opponent, rather than the opponent's dependence on them. In fact, all four tactics of a subordinate were a function primarily of the subordinate's own dependence on the superior. The broad implication was that people did not interpret the power relationship solely in relative terms. They treated their own and the other's power partly in absolute terms and somewhat independently. This led us to question prevailing zero-sum conceptions of power and triggered a shift toward a nonzero-sum conception (see Gamson, 1968 for a discussion). Reexamining Emerson's power dependence formulation, we found important justification for such a shift. In fact,

it became evident that power dependence theory had an implicit nonzero-sum feature left undeveloped by Emerson and his colleagues (Cook & Emerson, 1978; Emerson, 1972, 1981). At this point, we set out to develop the nonzero-sum side of Emerson's writings. The basic metatheory of the program began to crystalize, and this led to the third stage of the program.

The transition to the third stage is in part a transition from a "problem-driven" to "theory-driven" research enterprise. The first two stages emphasized a particular substantive issue (i.e., the determinants of a revolutionary coalition or the choice among a range of tactics). By the third stage, we had become more interested in the abstract social processes connecting a wide variety of substantive phenomena and committed to elaborating and developing power dependence notions beyond their previous boundaries. It was at this point that we began explicitly to "zero in" on the relationship between power capability and power use.

The basic difference of emphasis between problem-driven and theory-driven programs is worthy of note. Problem-driven programs are oriented to producing a substantial accumulation of information or data on a particular topic (e.g., inventories of effects or causes). Review articles exemplify the culmination of such research programs. Theory-driven programs tend to produce more theoretical formulations and much less concrete information or data over time (i.e., a higher ratio of theory or ideas to data (see Berger & Zelditch, in press). One can certainly argue about the merits of each approach, yet there is clearly an imbalance in favor of problem-driven programs, not just in social psychology but across the social sciences.

### STAGE 3: DEVELOPMENT OF A METATHEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The metatheory took initial shape in Bacharach and Lawler's books of 1980 and 1981, one on political processes in organizations and the other on two-party bargaining. The metatheory has continued to evolve and, at this point, is captured by three basic assumptions about power.

#### The power-process assumption

The research program adopts very sharp distinctions between power as a capability, the use of that power, and actual or realized power (Lawler, 1992). Analyses of power—in the larger sociological, psychological, and political science literatures and in the more specific literature on conflict and bargaining—tend to reveal three emphases. First, some analyses treat power as a potential or capability to influence the opponent (Bierstedt, 1950; Chamberlain, 1955; Emerson, 1972). These tend to reflect a structural emphasis. Second, some analyses focus on how people use power or the tactics directed at influencing another (Blalock, 1989; Kipnis, 1976; Strauss, 1978; Tedeschi et al., 1973). These tend to reflect a

behavioral or tactical emphasis. A tactic is defined as a move or set of moves directed at influencing another's cognition or behavior (Lawler, 1992). Third, some analyses essentially reduce power to the result of an influence process (Dahl, 1957; Dunlop, 1950; Gray & Tallman, 1987). These reflect an outcome or "who really has it" emphasis. The three conceptions of power, of course, are complementary, and all are important to an understanding of power relations (for supporting evidence, see Molm, 1990).

Our framework treats power capability, power use, and actual power as distinct moments in a power process (Lawler, 1992). In any power process, actors ostensibly have a structurally-based capability to affect each other's resources, an option to use or not use that capability, and an uncertain probability of success. Thus, it is clear that a power capability may or may not be used and, if used, it may or may not be effective. This sort of conceptualization is consistent in general with many others, especially the social exchange formulations of Cook (Cook & Emerson, 1978) and Molm (1987) and the organizational perspective of Pfeffer (1981).

A sharp distinction between these three parts of a power process raises a number of important research questions (Lawler, 1992): When do parties use a power capability available to them? If a power capability is used, what tactical form does the power use (i.e., tactics) take? When does the use of a power capability result in actual power? Are there conditions under which a power capability itself—without the mediation of action—produces actual or realized power? All of these questions are important. But some or all of them are neglected by conceptions of power that dismiss one or more of the moments in the assumed power process. Furthermore, with approaches—or measures—that equate power with effective or successful power, such theoretical questions are virtually defined away (e.g., Dahl, 1957; Dunlop, 1950). Our framework keeps all three questions very much alive.

### The social structure assumption

The second assumption is a fairly subtle one about the foundation of the conflict likely to activate a power process. Specifically, we assume that most conflicts—whether between individuals, groups, organizations, or societies—have some social structural basis (Lawler, 1992). Power capabilities are grounded in structure. Our focus on power capability and power use is, therefore, tantamount to a focus on social structure and social action. The principal units of structure are sets of interrelated positions, abstractly representing the places that people or groups can come to occupy. Structure should have both a horizontal and vertical dimension in most contexts, and following the macrostructural theory of Blau (1977), these represent heterogeneity and inequality, respectively.

The structural positions, formal or informal, that convey a power capability have associated interests. Occupants represent these interests, and the interests are likely to be passed on to successive occupants. For example, conflicts of interest between sales and production managers over product lines tend to persist



even when the occupants of these positions change. All of this may sound familiar and obvious, but in the social psychological literature on bargaining, there is a fairly subtle difference between structural and interpersonal interpretations or assumptions about the sources of conflict. An interpersonal approach is implied by Dean Pruitt's (1981) conceptualization of negotiation. He indicates that "negotiation is a process by which a joint decision is made by two or more parties [with opposing interests]," . . . (Pruitt, 1981, p. 1). To say that parties have opposing interests is to say that they have different individual needs leading to incompatible preferences. Pruitt (1981, p. 4) indicates further that "interests should never be regarded as inherently opposed." From such an interpersonal view, bargaining or negotiation becomes a form of primarily cooperative decision making, and the task of conflict resolution is primarily to reconcile individual needs and opinions (Lawler, 1992).

In contrast, the social structure assumption stresses the competitive side of the mixed-motive dilemma. It indicates that conflict will continually resurface even if position occupants change (Dahrendorf, 1959; Ury, Brett, & Goldberg, 1988), and it suggests that the resolution of conflict requires a change in the social structure of which the individuals or groups are a part. A structuralist premise sees conflict resolution as more problematic and temporary in ongoing relations such as those created by organizational structures (see Kanter, 1977). While structuralist and interpersonal premises are each useful for some purposes, it is important to recognize that our program comes down on the structural side, and this is one reason for its emphasis on distributive rather than integrative bargaining (Bacharach & Lawler, 1981a).

The structural assumption must be tempered, however, to accommodate parties' capacities to define and redefine relevant power capabilities. Bacharach and Lawler (1981a) emphasized the cognitive nature of power, distinguished various imageries of power, and suggested that actors' responses to power depend on their imagery. Parties interpret, translate, and otherwise make concrete the interests and power embedded in their social structural positions. They can bridge differences, find common ground, and otherwise reduce the conflict emanating from the social structure, or they can risk escalation of the conflict, attempt to intimidate their opponent, or engage in aggression. Structural positions create and frame the conflict, but it is the occupants of positions in the structure who decide specifically how to deal with it (Lawler, 1992).

The importance of position occupants is reflected in the fact that parties with smaller power capabilities can sometimes achieve greater influence than those with larger power capabilities; the use of some forms of power (especially coercion) over time can undermine the power of the user (Emerson's notion, "to use power is to lose it"); and tactics designed to gain advantage in the immediate situation may produce integrative rather than divisive effects on the relationship in the long run—for example, by increasing the mutual dependence of actors as we have shown elsewhere (Bacharach & Lawler, 1980; Lawler, 1992). This suggests the importance of the tactical dimension of behavior.

Power use is defined as a tactic chosen by an actor in the context of a struc-

turally determined power capability. Tactics have an impression management facet and flow ostensibly from conscious or nonconscious deliberation in which power is estimated, options assessed, and consequences anticipated. While this implies a rational choice process, it is highly bounded and subjective. For most purposes in our program, a simple and common two-fold classification of tactics, as conciliatory and hostile, is sufficient (see Pruitt, 1981; Lawler & Ford, in press). Conciliatory tactics are positive acts, communicating a willingness to coordinate or collaborate; hostile tactics are negative acts, communicating an intention to compete or resist.

### The nonzero-sum assumption

The most central assumption guiding recent theoretical work is a nonzero-sum conception of power (Lawler, 1986, 1992; Lawler & Bacharach, 1986; Lawler & Ford, in press). Zero-sum approaches to power take for granted a fixed sum of power in a relationship or set of relationships, such that a change in one party's power capability will produce an equal and opposite change in the other's. In contrast, a nonzero-sum conception indicates that the absolute or total amount of power in a relationship is not fixed, but variable. Given that the total or absolute amount of power in a relationship can vary, both parties in a relation could experience an increase in power; both could experience a decrease; or, of course, one might gain power while the other's remains constant (Lawler, 1992). Nearly all approaches to power adopt a zero-sum conception in practice if not always in principle (see Gamson, 1968, Tannenbaum, 1968, and Kanter, 1977 for exceptions).

Emerson's power dependence theory provides the basis for a nonzero-sum approach to power. Recall that from power dependence theory, the power capability of A is based on the dependence of B on A for valued resources, and vice versa (Emerson 1962, 1972). Thus, given the dimensions of dependence, the power of party A is a function of B's value and alternatives, while the power of B is a function of A's value and alternatives. *Each party's power is based on the other's dependence on them, not their own dependence on the other.* This is the ultimate source of the nonzero-sum premise found in power dependence theory. The implication is that the absolute power of each party in a dyad is not interrelated a priori in a specified way. The amount of power in the relationship can vary as can the distribution across the actors. This conceptualization is consistent with the notion of Tannenbaum and Kahn (1958) that the total control in an organization can vary independent of its distribution across hierarchical levels.

From a nonzero-sum conception, we have developed a contrast between the total power in a relationship and the relative power of the parties (or power differences) in that relationship. This contrast was initially proposed in the 1981 bargaining book. I have developed it further (Lawler, 1986) in theory and research on bilateral deterrence and conflict spiral (Lawler, 1986; Lawler, Ford, & Blegen, 1988). With the unit of analysis being a single relation or dyad, total power refers to the sum of each party's absolute power (i.e.,  $P_{ab} + P_{ba}$ ); relative

power refers to the power difference or ratio of each party's absolute power (i.e.,  $P_{ab}/(P_{ab} + P_{ba})$ ). Increases or decreases in total power involve changes in the degree of mutual dependence, or what Emerson (1972) termed "relational cohesion." Shifts in relative power occur either through a redistribution of existing power, or when total power changes and these changes are distributed unequally within the relationship.

The importance of the distinction between total and relative power is implicit in Kanter's (1977) case study. She shows, for example, that increasing the power of middle managers does not necessarily decrease the power of lower level managers. If middle managers are "empowered" by becoming more involved in strategy planning and external subunit relations, then their subordinates might also be "empowered" through greater discretion and autonomy over the day-to-day activities of the subunit. The power of both middle and lower managers, thus, can move in the same direction. An expansion of the tasks or uncertainties faced by an organization or its subunits is a condition facilitating the growth of total power and essentially the empowerment of each party to the relationships (Kanter, 1977; Ch. 7). In a similar vein, Tannenbaum shows that enhanced participation in organizational decision making can increase actors' control over others but also their receptivity to control by them, thereby enhancing total control (see Tannenbaum, 1968).

The main point is that relative and total power can change in a variety of interesting and somewhat independent ways. If two organizations over time become the exclusive providers of valued commodities, then the total power in the relationship has grown without a change in the relative power, as long as the net growth of each party's absolute power is equal. If labor and management jockey for position between contract negotiation periods by successfully increasing the other's dependence, then the result of this power struggle will be a growth of mutual dependence in their relationship (Lawler, 1992). In an interpersonal context, if actors with a close relationship each develop their own set of friends, then total power—and, hence, relational cohesion—declines without necessarily changing their relative power. Yet if only one person develops a set of friends, a change in both total and relative power occurs, though in this case all of the change in total power would be an artifact of the change in relative power. The contrast of relative and total power disentangles two facets of a power relation that are typically confounded in research on power (see Lawler, 1986, for more discussion of this point).

To take a more abstract illustration, assume that each party's absolute power can vary from 1 to 20 units and that the total power in the relationship can vary from 2 to 40 units. A nonzero-sum conception leads us to ask whether a relationship in which each party has 5 units of power capability produces different rates of conflictual behavior than a relationship in which each party has 15 units of power capability. Furthermore, if a relationship with a distribution of 5 units for A and 20 for B changes to one with a distribution of 10 for A and 15 for B, then relative power has changed but total power has not. A more complex situation is one in which A has 5 units of power and B 15, but the change is to a situa-

tion in which A has 10 units and B 30—in this case, total power has increased from 25 to 40 and the power difference has increased from 10 units to 20. A non-zero-sum conception of power takes account of such patterns of change, while a zero-sum conception attends only to the power differences.

### From metatheory to theory

The major research questions stem from the distinction of relative and total power: First, how does the total power in a relationship affect the use of conciliatory and hostile tactics in a conflict? Second, how do equal versus unequal power affect the use of conciliatory and hostile tactics in conflict? The general answers to these questions are expressed in two propositions, which represent the common themes around which much of the specific theory and research can be organized (Lawler, 1992):

- \* *Total-power proposition:* If parties have an equal power relationship and conflict occurs, a relationship with higher total power will produce more conciliation and less hostility than a relationship with lower total power.
- \* *Relative-power proposition:* If each party has a "significant" amount of absolute power and conflict occurs, a relationship with unequal power will produce more hostility and less conciliation than a relationship with equal power.

The argument of the 1981 bargaining book was that the effect of power depends on the degree that actors' imagery of power stresses absolute, relative, or total power. If actors adopt a nonzero conception of power, then they should respond to variations of the total power in their relationship; if they adopt a zero-sum imagery, then their tactical responses should be consistent with traditional models of power.

The total-power proposition captures an implication of Emerson's power dependence theory as well as selected theorizing on deterrence in international contexts (Blalock, 1989; Emerson, 1972; Lawler, 1992; Morgan, 1977). In Emerson's terms, total power constitutes the level of mutual dependence or "relational cohesion" in the relationship. Higher total power in a relationship essentially produces an increase in the opportunity costs associated with leaving the relation (Lawler, 1992; Lawler & Bacharach, 1987); parties have a larger stake in the bargaining and, more specifically, in bringing it to a reasonable conclusion. Thus, bargaining in relationships with higher, rather than lower, total power generally should be more cooperative and produce more mutually satisfactory agreements. While counterexamples to this general pattern can be identified, this is the basic idea implied by power dependence theory (Emerson, 1962, 1972).

The relative power proposition expresses the notion that relationships with unequal power tend to be less stable than ones with equal power (cf. Emerson, 1972; Rubin & Brown, 1975). A major reason, particularly important in explicit bargaining, is disagreement over the legitimacy of power differences or, specifically, how such differences should affect a negotiated solution. With an unequal

power relationship, the disadvantaged party may resist solutions that reflect their power differences, while the advantaged party may advocate those solutions that provide them with payoffs proportional to their power advantage (Bacharach & Lawler, 1981a, chap. 6; Lawler, 1992; Lawler & Ford, in press). If power capabilities are unequal and parties face a conflict, then the legitimacy of the power difference is likely to be contested, because an equal split is generally a highly prominent solution (see Pruitt, 1981, and Schelling, 1960, for more discussion of "prominence"). Thus, unequal power tends to complicate the issues faced by parties to explicit bargaining, thereby reducing the prospects of conflict resolution.

Focusing primarily on absolute and total power, we posed two primary hypotheses about bargaining. First, concession behavior of an actor would be a function of that party's own dependence, not the other's; and second, the greater the total power (i.e., mutual dependence) in the relationship the greater the likelihood of conflict resolution. The Bacharach and Lawler (1981b) experiments provided parties information on each other's alternatives, and results generally supported these predictions. Concession behavior was primarily (though not exclusively) a function of whether the actor could expect a good agreement from an alternative bargaining partner; and greater total power in the relationship produced higher average rates of concession across actors. Moreover, in several experiments, agreements were more likely when both actors had alternative bargaining partners who were likely to offer poor rather than good alternative outcomes. These results can be interpreted as "relational cohesion effects" in Emerson's (1972) terms, and they probably reflect the opportunity costs of leaving the current relationship to negotiate with another from whom a poor agreement is likely (see also Lawler, 1992). Overall, Bacharach and Lawler's (1981a) research supported a nonzero-sum conception of power, because parties in conflict did respond to the total power dimension.

#### STAGE 4: BILATERAL DETERRENCE AND CONFLICT SPIRAL

The fourth stage of the program not only fleshed out the different effects of total and relative power, but also dealt with a problem that we stumbled into while doing the book on bargaining. Emerson (1972) began with the fairly standard notion that power is the ability of an actor to levy costs on another, yet power dependence theory actually encompassed only one form of cost—*opportunity costs* (i.e., the value foregone when a choice is made). Retaliation or punishment costs were not easily incorporated, and this assumption made it difficult to directly connect power dependence theory to the use of hostile tactics, such as threats and punishments (see Bacharach & Lawler, 1981a; Lawler & Ford, in press; Molm, 1987).

Following the 1981 book, I offered a simple theory of bilateral deterrence and conflict spiral (Lawler, 1986). The focus was still limited to the impact of

power capabilities on power use. In this sense, it was designed to understand the deterrent and spiral-like effects of power capabilities, *per se*. We assumed a situation where both parties in a dyad have a capability to damage each other punitively (e.g., see also Hornstein, 1965; Michener & Cohen, 1973). There were four steps in the development of this theoretical stage (see Lawler & Ford, *in press*, for a similar analysis).

The *first step* involved the explication of two classic arguments, about the link between the magnitude of a punitive capability and the use of that capability through threats or punishments, one by Deutsch (1973) and the other by Tedeschi and associates (Tedeschi et al., 1973). The trucking-game tradition of Deutsch and Krauss (1962) and related work suggests that, when available, a power capability tends to be used and, by implication, the larger the capability the greater the frequency of use. Use ostensibly leads to counteruse, giving rise to a conflict spiral from which everyone loses (Youngs, 1986). The central argument is that, all other things being equal, where parties have larger punitive capabilities, a conflict between them should produce greater hostility.

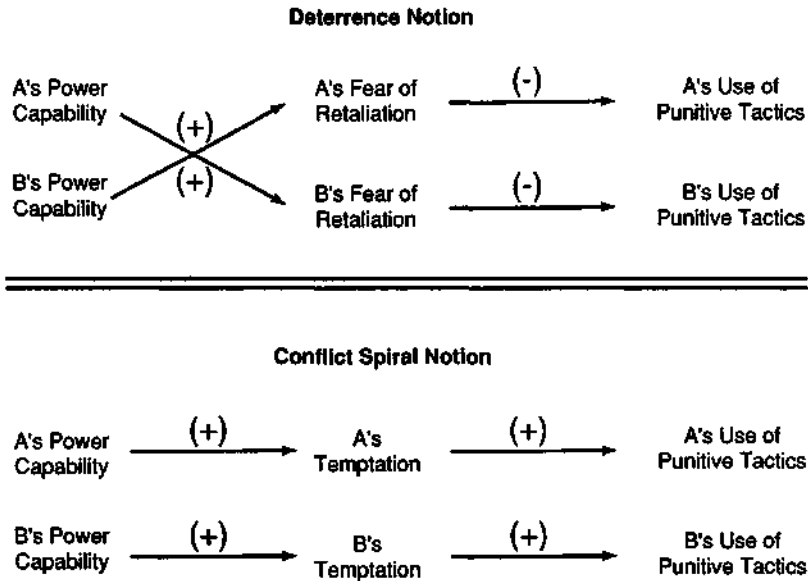
The alternative argument is based on other social psychological research that implicitly or explicitly incorporates principles of deterrence. For example, Tedeschi's analysis of threats (Tedeschi et al., 1973) indicates that a large power capability for A decreases B's use of hostile tactics (see also Hornstein, 1965; Michener & Cohen, 1973). These different lines of research represent a complicated disjuncture between underlying perspectives, which had been overlooked in reviews of this literature (e.g., Pruitt, 1981). My purpose was to reconstruct these classic arguments in a way that revealed their incongruencies. Figure 2 contains this reconstruction. An equal-power relationship is assumed at this point.

The classic deterrence argument is that each actor's use of punitive tactics will be an inverse function of the other's (absolute) power capability (Lawler, 1986). The other's capability produces a "fear of retaliation" that is crucial to effective deterrence. The conflict spiral argument, in contrast, indicates that larger power capabilities create more temptation to use power. Overall, the classic arguments specify different mediating processes—fear of retaliation versus temptation—and indicate that an actor's use of punitive tactics is a function of different absolute power dimensions within the relationship.

This characterization of the two arguments, however, also points to a theoretical problem. Each implicit theory traces power use to either an actor's own or the other's power capability, but not both (Lawler, 1986). The conflict spiral argument suggests that parties use power simply because they have some, while the deterrence argument suggests that parties do not use power because of the opponents' power. Neither theoretical position traces the punitive tactics of parties to *both* their own power capability and that of others. This did not make sense, intuitively, and it was important to have a theoretical formulation that tied the punitive tactics of a party to both their own and the opponent's power capability, without reverting to a zero-sum conception of power.

The *second step* proposed a solution to this problem, which built the "expect-

FIGURE 2 Classical Views

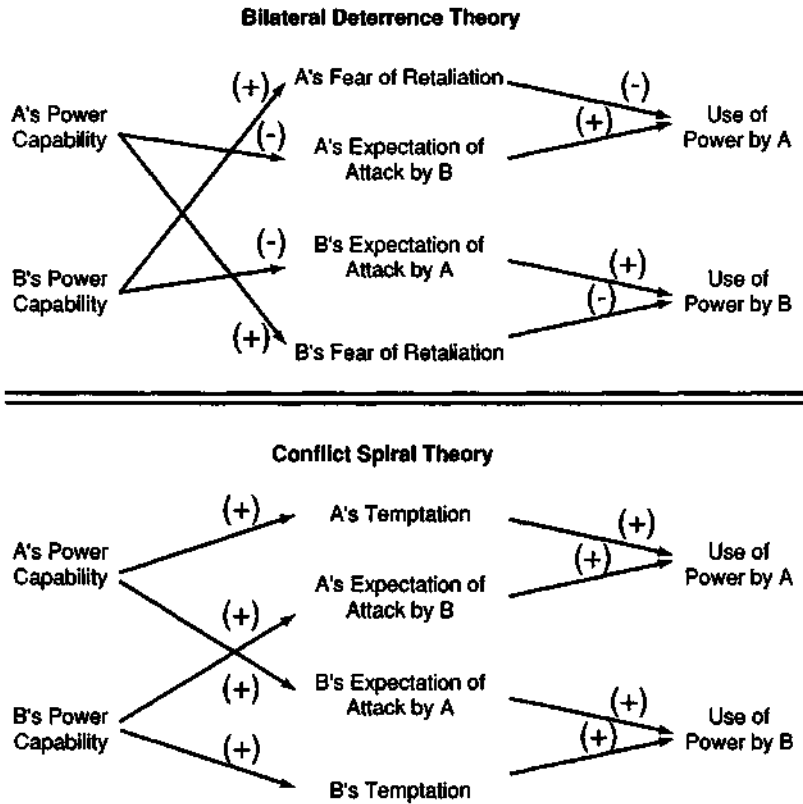


tation of attack" into each theory. The idea for this came from Schelling (1960), who had proposed that successful deterrence was contingent on two factors: a high fear of retaliation on the part of both actors and a perception that this fear will reduce the other's inclination to attack. Notice that this implicitly involves an inference from both one's own and the other's absolute power capability. Furthermore, a variety of social psychological work had documented that parties who formed expectations of attack in a conflict act more competitively even in advance of anticipated attacks (see for example, Pruitt, 1981; Rubin & Brown, 1975; Tedeschi et al., 1969). This fits our early hypotheses about cognitive imagery. Treating expectation of attack as a mediating cognition also had the advantage of incorporating an important facet of each actor's perception of the other's perception.

In the revised formulation (see Figure 3), each actor's use of punitive tactics is now a function of both their own and the other's power capabilities, and the intervening cognitive processes expand (Lawler, 1986; Lawler & Ford, in press). Bilateral deterrence theory predicts that higher punitive power for both actors results in each having a higher fear of retaliation (due to the other's high power) and lower expectations of attack (due to their own high power). These conditions, in turn, produce lower frequencies of punitive action on the part of both parties. In contrast, conflict spiral theory predicts that higher total power will increase the temptation of each actor to use his or her power (due to each actor's own power) while also increasing the expectation of attack (due to the other's power). These conditions enhance the frequency of punitive action in the dyad.

Overall, the competition of the theories is somewhat "friendlier" because

FIGURE 3 Reformulation of Classical Views



of the addition of an identical intervening cognition (i.e., expectations of attack), but the differences between them also are sharpened because expectations of attack are based on a party's own power in bilateral deterrence theory and the other's power in conflict spiral theory (Lawler & Ford, in press). As this formulation developed, I also made the simplifying assumption that actors would expect each other to use the underlying power dimensions in the same way. In other words, if A's fear of retaliation is based on B's power, then A will expect B's fear of retaliation to be based on A's power. A's expectation of attack, therefore, is tantamount to A's perception of B's fear of retaliation.

Having developed bilateral deterrence and conflict spiral predictions for total power in the relationship, the *third step* was to consider equal versus unequal power. To this point, the focus had been on each actor's absolute power and on the total power in the relationship. If the predictions of each theory for equal power relationships (see Figure 3) are simply transposed to an unequal power relationship, the conclusion is that both theories predict no difference in the rate of punitive tactics (at the level of the dyad) between equal and unequal power relationships. In the case of unequal power, the rate of power use by the lower



power party would diminish while the higher power party's power use would increase proportionately.

For example, assume both A and B begin with a capability to reduce each other's outcomes by 50 percent, but then A's power increases to 60 and B's decreases to 40. Bilateral deterrence theory suggests that A's fear of retaliation and expectation of attack would decrease, and B's fear of retaliation and expectation of attack would increase. Assuming that changes in the fear of retaliation and expectation of attack are proportional, any increase in A's use of punitive tactics would be offset by a corresponding decrease in B's use of punitive tactics. A similar conclusion is reached from conflict spiral theory. Thus, without additional assumptions, both theories predict no difference between equal and unequal power at the dyad level as long as the total power in the relationship remains constant. This implication is inconsistent with Emerson's (1962, 1972) analysis of power-balancing tactics and Bacharach and Lawler's (1981a) analysis of instability within unequal power relationships.

By thinking more about how actors might interpret absolute power levels in the context of unequal power, this issue was resolved. From bilateral deterrence theory, the prediction was that unequal power relationships would generate more use of punitive tactics, while from conflict spiral theory the prediction was the opposite. The theoretical reasoning underlying these predictions focused on the relative weight parties would give the mediating cognitions in Figure 3. I assumed that when actors are in an equal power relationship, they give equal subjective weight to the fear of retaliation and expectation of attack in the case of bilateral deterrence, and equal subjective weight to temptation and expectation of attack in the case of conflict spiral (Lawler, 1986). But in an unequal power relationship, bilateral deterrence assumes that the higher power party gives greater weight to the fear of retaliation (now lower, given the other's lower power) and that the lower power party gives greater weight to the expectation of attack (now higher, given the other's higher power). The result is that both parties in an unequal power relationship will be inclined toward more use of punitive tactics, but for different reasons. These are the conditions especially likely to produce high levels of hostility in a conflict. Extrapolating from the bilateral deterrence formulation, unequal power relationships are particularly prone to conflict escalation as long as the lower power party has significant absolute power.

The conflict spiral formulation makes the opposite prediction, less punitive action under unequal power than equal power. The lower power party ostensibly submits due to lower temptation; while the higher power party forms corresponding low expectations of attack and anticipates that the difference in power capability will produce the desired outcomes without having to actually use the capability. You might say that, from conflict spiral theory, deterrence in its *unilateral* form of one actor deterring another occurs under conditions of unequal power. Thus, one finds a bit of conflict spiral logic within deterrence theory and a bit of deterrence logic within conflict spiral theory.

The *fourth step* was empirical research. We pitted bilateral deterrence and conflict spiral theories against one another (Lawler, et al., 1988) using a fairly

standard two-party laboratory setting in which participants (1) exchange offers across a series of bargaining rounds (e.g., Chertkoff & Esser, 1976; Komorita & Barnes, 1969; Siegel & Fouraker, 1960), (2) represent the interests of a group in conflict with another group, and (3) could levy punitive damage against each other on each round (e.g., Michener & Cohen, 1973). Instructions encouraged an individualistic orientation (i.e., maximization of the payoffs for their own group without regard to the payoffs of the opposing group). Punitive capability was manipulated by varying the maximum amount (i.e., capability) of an opponent's resources that the subject could destroy, that is, 10 percent versus 90 percent (e.g., Lawler et al., 1988). Punitive behavior was measured by the frequency of inflicting damage (with the magnitude fixed) summed across both actors, while conciliatory behavior was measured by the total magnitude of concession making in the dyad and the likelihood of agreement.

The empirical evidence supported the predictions of bilateral deterrence theory over those of conflict spiral theory. In two studies, the total punitive capability had a negative impact on the use of punitive tactics; one study indicated that this effect occurred mainly in the later phases of the bargaining after subjects experienced the negative consequences of power use (Lawler & Bacharach, 1987; Lawler et al., 1988). Furthermore, punitive tactics were used more frequently in unequal power relationships than in equal power relationships, and there were no differences between high- and low-power actors' use of punitive tactics. Similar (though weaker) support for bilateral deterrence occurred for conciliatory tactics. Parties in relationships with high total power made larger concessions overall than those in relationships with low total power, and they made larger concessions when in relationships with equal, compared to unequal, power. Significant effects were not observed for the likelihood of agreement across the two experiments (Lawler et al., 1988).<sup>1</sup>

In summary, the theory of bilateral deterrence extends the idea of total power from dependence-based to coercive-based power (see Lawler, 1992; Lawler & Bacharach, 1987). Beyond our experimental evidence, some corroboration for the extension to coercive power can be found in the deterrence literature on international relations, in particular, research dealing with war in bilateral and multilateral power systems (e.g., Houweling & Siccama, 1988; Thompson, 1986). From such literature, if two or more parties develop and maintain high levels of coercive power (i.e., capability to damage each other), then each will either not use that capability or will use it less frequently, because they fear the costs of retaliation. This is termed a "general deterrence" process by Morgan (1977). Theories of dependence and coercive power emphasize different types of cost but incorporate the same total and relative power proposition.

<sup>1</sup>While research evidence currently supports bilateral deterrence theory over conflict spiral, it would be premature to reject the conflict spiral formulation. The conflict spiral predictions are likely to obtain under some conditions (for example, if there is a "first strike" incentive for power use). Further theoretical and empirical work is needed on the conditions under which conflict spiral effects occur (see Lawler & Ford, in press).

The distinct lines of research on power dependence and coercive power in the program each support the usefulness of a nonzero-sum conception of power. In the case of both dependence and punitive forms of power, total power has cohesive or integrative effects on the relationship, and these effects are distinguishable from the effects of relative power or power differences. Both power dependence and bilateral deterrence formulations indicate that the primary reason higher total power produces less use of that power is the cost associated with power use: opportunity costs for power dependence and retaliation costs for bilateral deterrence. In both lines of specific research, furthermore, unequal power engenders more hostility and less conciliation in the context of a conflict. Bilateral deterrence clarifies the role of unequal power by suggesting why lower power parties with substantial power capability may resist efforts at intimidation and use power as much as the higher power actor. An effort is needed to understand further the conditions under which unequal power relationships produce such resistance rather than compliance by the lower power party.

#### STAGE 5: THEORETICAL EXTENSIONS

Currently, I am addressing several new issues that follow from the nonzero-sum approach to power. The first concerns the effectiveness of unilateral initiatives in two-party bargaining. The primary question is whether total and relative power in a relationship affects the success of the conciliatory tactic (unilateral initiatives) proposed by Osgood (1962) and empirically examined by Lindskold (1978), Patchen (1987), and Boyle and Lawler (1991). This project integrates ideas from Osgood's (1962) notion of GRIT with Lawler's (1986) bilateral-deterrence formulation (see Lawler & Ford, 1991). The second issue concerns the emergence of a commitment in dyads within a larger exchange network building from the work of Cook and Emerson (1978, 1984). We have modified Emerson's concept of "relational cohesion" to incorporate both the total and relative dimensions of power, and we explain commitment in social exchange from this reformulation (Lawler & Yoon, 1990). Each of these theoretical extensions is summarized next.

##### Power and unilateral initiatives

This project (Lawler & Ford, in press) addresses the following specific question: Given a pattern of conflict between two groups or organizations, how does power in the relationship affect the ability of a party to generate mutual conciliation in explicit bargaining through unilateral initiatives? To answer this question, we focus on how the power relationship should affect the impressions "given off" by unilateral initiatives once parties have reached the bargaining table.

According to Osgood's (1962) original formulation, unilateral initiatives are a method of enhancing trust and, thereby, reversing the direction of a conflict

escalator from upward to downward. The danger of unilateral initiatives, however, is that they will be interpreted as a sign of weakness and, thus, result in less rather than more conciliation by the opponent (e.g., see Benton, Kelley, & Liebling, 1972; Boyle & Lawler, 1991; Komorita & Brenner, 1968; Seigel & Fouraker, 1960). The implication is as follows: If unilateral initiatives enhance trust more than they give off impressions of weakness, then such tactics should increase the opponent's conciliation; but if unilateral initiatives convey weakness more than they enhance trust, then such tactics should backfire and reduce conciliation by the opponent. This simple idea is the starting point for analyzing the impact of the power relationship.

By extending bilateral deterrence predictions to concession behavior, we propose how total and relative power capabilities should affect each actor's response to unilateral initiatives. To accomplish this, it is first necessary to consider how total and relative power affects perceptions of trust and impressions of weakness. Two implicit assumptions are extrapolated from bilateral deterrence theory (Lawler, 1986; Lawler & Ford, 1991); (1) Given equal power between two parties in explicit bargaining, higher total power in the relationship reduces the degree that unilateral initiatives create impressions of weakness; and (2) relationships with unequal, compared to equal, power reduce the degree that unilateral initiatives create trust.

Elaborating the first assumption, if each party has considerable coercive capability and these are known to each, then it is difficult for either party to sustain an inference of weakness (or softness) when the opponent engages in unilateral concession making. Bilateral deterrence implies that the higher the total power in the relation, the quicker and more receptive a party becomes in accepting an opponent's unilateral initiatives. This is because higher total power produces greater fear of retaliation and lower expectations of unprovoked attack. Thus, in relationships where each party has high, rather than low, levels of power capability, unilateral initiatives should not create impressions of weakness or softness (Lawler & Ford, 1991). This reasoning leads to the following proposition:

- \* *Proposition 1:* Given equal power in explicit bargaining, if parties have higher rather than lower levels of power capability, then the effectiveness of unilateral initiatives increases.

Turning to relative power, unequal power complicates the interpretive task of parties facing another who uses unilateral initiatives (Lawler & Ford, 1991). From bilateral deterrence theory (*ceteris paribus*), conflict within an unequal power relationship should generate more distrust than conflict in an equal power relationship, posing serious problems for unilateral initiatives by either party. These problems would be compounded if, as suggested by bilateral deterrence notions, the higher power actor argues for solutions that reflect their higher power, while the lower power actor argues for more equal solutions (Lawler, 1992). The upshot is that parties with an unequal power relation should have a more difficult time creating minimal levels of trust in explicit bargaining,

especially after an initial period of mutual resistance and hostility. Thus, the basic proposition is as follows:

- \* *Proposition 2:* Given fixed total power in the relationship, if parties in explicit bargaining have unequal rather than equal power capability, then the effectiveness of unilateral initiatives decreases.

Research on these propositions is underway, and it should provide more indication of whether the contrast between total and relative power is useful to understand tactical behavior in bargaining.

### Commitment in exchange networks

A "transaction" in social exchange theory is a negotiated solution to a mixed motive problem (Cook & Emerson, 1978). One often cited difference between social and economic exchange is that exchanges in social contexts are not independent (Emerson, 1972, 1981). Repetitive exchanges between the same parties tend to emerge, and these have social effects that cannot be accounted for by economic-exchange models. Various theoretical and empirical efforts have attempted to understand the sources and consequences of repetitive exchange, frequently conceptualized as "commitment processes" (Cook & Emerson, 1978, 1984; Tallman, Gray, & Leik, 1991; Williamson, 1975). We are developing a line of research that utilizes the nonzero-sum concept of power to elaborate how the power relationship affects the likelihood of commitment formation (Lawler & Yoon, 1990). Commitment formation in dyadic relations is important in part because it can produce power balance (i.e., equality) throughout the network (Cook & Emerson, 1984) but also fragment a social network, breaking it down into a series of disconnected dyads (see Markovsky, Willer, & Patton, 1988; Willer, Markovsky, & Patton, 1989).

Commitment is defined broadly as an obligation to maintain a relation over time (Tallman, et al., 1991), with continuous repetitive exchange between the same actors being the behavioral indicator of that obligation (Cook & Emerson, 1978, 1984). Our approach is to treat commitment as a property of a relationship and focus on mutual or bilateral forms of commitment; in addition, our approach is behavioral rather than attitudinal, and the negotiated transaction is the joint behavior of primary concern. The longer sequences of repeated exchange signify stronger commitments, especially if negotiated exchanges continue despite better alternatives.

To understand the structural sources of commitment, we propose to use the contrast of relative and total power to modify Emerson's idea of "relational cohesion" (see Lawler & Yoon, 1990). The problem is to combine or integrate the effects of relative power with those for total power, such that relational cohesion is a result of both higher total power and more equal relative power. One way to

characterize the combined effect is as a function of the geometric mean of two actors' absolute power, as follows:

$$\text{Relational Cohesion (C)} = \sqrt{P_{ab} \times P_{ba}} \text{ or } \sqrt{D_{ba} \times D_{ab}}$$

where

- $P_{ab}$  is the power of A over B
- $P_{ba}$  is the power of B over A
- $D_{ba}$  is the dependence of B on A
- $D_{ab}$  is the dependence of A on B

A geometric-mean specification of relational cohesion is similar to Molm's (1987) concept of average power since it uses the notion of a mean to capture the mutual dependence of actors in a dyad. However, our specification also takes into account the effect of relative power. This is important because while arithmetic average power, adopted by Molm (1987), varies only as a function of the sum of the two values of power (i.e., total power), the geometric-mean specification varies as a function of both total power and relative power. More specifically, the relationship of relational cohesion to total power and relative power in the geometric-mean specification can be treated in terms of first partial derivatives as follows (see Lawler & Yoon, 1990):

$$\begin{aligned} C &= f(\text{TP}, \text{RP}) \\ \partial C / \partial \text{RP} &< 0 \\ \partial C / \partial \text{TP} &> 0 \end{aligned}$$

where

- C is relational cohesion
- RP is relative power ( $| P_{ab} - P_{ba} |$ )
- TP is total power ( $P_{ab} + P_{ba}$ )

As the preceding inequalities in first partial derivatives indicate, relational cohesion in our specification is an increasing function of total power if the power difference (relative power) effect is constant, while it is an inverse function of power difference if the total power effect is constant. Verbally, assuming that relational cohesion underlies commitment formation, the geometric-mean specification leads to the following proposition:

- \* *Proposition 1:* If total power in a relationship increases and the power difference decreases, then greater commitment will develop.

Some evidence in support of this idea can be found in Lawler and Bacharach (1987). In that study, two actors bargained over a single, distributive issue in a fairly standard two-party bargaining context, except that each could also negotiate with an alternative person. Relative and total dependence was manipulated by varying the probability of a good agreement from the alternative. Coercive capability (i.e., potential to punish) also was manipulated. The results indicated that the likelihood of conflict resolution (agreement) was significantly

higher when parties had both high total and equal power in their relationship. The implication is that in an exchange network, commitments are most likely in relations with higher total power and lower power difference. Research in progress is developing and testing such implications of relational cohesion.

## CONCLUSION

The nonzero-sum approach to power contains the same fundamental message as Tannenbaum's (1968, 1974) concept of control. Both the distribution and the total amount of power can vary in a relationship, group, or organization. The total amount of power or control is essentially the integrative dimension of social power, or the degree that parties are dependent on one another to achieve valued goals (Bacharach & Lawler, 1980). Relative power is the distributive dimension of social power, reflecting differential dependencies among parties who are often embedded in organizational hierarchies. These two dimensions capture the variable-sum and fixed-sum aspects of social power, respectively, and by incorporating them into a single framework, we direct attention to both the divisive and cohesive effects of power in relationships.

The five stages of the program reflect the development of the nonzero-sum conception of power from an implicit to an explicit theme. In work on revolutionary coalitions, the co-optation tactic can be construed as enhancing the influence of both the leader (who reduces the inclination of the target to form a revolutionary coalition) and the target subordinate (who influences the other subordinate). Applying Tannenbaum's (1968, pp. 12–20) theory, an increase in total control underlies the effectiveness of the co-optation tactic. Turning to the early empirical work on power dependence, parties evaluated tactic options based on their own dependence (i.e., the other's power) more than the other's dependence (i.e., their own power); they treated power dependence in absolute rather than relative terms (see Bacharach & Lawler, 1981b). Thus, parties to a conflict seemed to adopt a nonzero imagery of power somewhat inconsistent with prevailing zero-sum conceptions offered by scholars.

The nonzero-sum approach to power was developed explicitly in the 1981 bargaining book (Bacharach & Lawler, 1981a) and in the theories of bilateral deterrence and conflict spiral (Lawler, 1986). Assuming a conflict, two primary predictions reflect the core ideas: First, the greater the total power in a relationship (i.e., mutual dependence of parties or bilateral coercive capability), the greater the use of conciliatory tactics and the lower the use of punitive tactics in the relationship. These propositions have received empirical support from relatively distinct empirical work on dependence and punitive forms of power (see Bacharach & Lawler, 1981a; Lawler & Bacharach, 1987; Lawler, et al., 1988).

The nonzero-sum approach is being developed further in current work. One line of research applies our nonzero-sum approach to the question of what power conditions will make unilateral initiatives (Osgood, 1962) more or less effective in explicit bargaining (Lawler & Ford, 1991). A second line of research elaborates the integrative side of social power by reconceptualizing Emerson's

(1972) concept of "relational cohesion" as a joint function of high total and highly equal power (Lawler & Yoon, 1990). Parties to social exchange should develop stronger commitments over time if structural conditions involve high versus low relational cohesion. Both emerging lines of work emphasize the integrative effects that a power relationship can have in conflict and bargaining.

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