
POWER AND THE PERCEPTION OF THE FUTURE

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In this paper the results are presented of a 6-nation massive survey in which the relationship between assessments of social power and peace agreement, pessimism-optimism, and expectations of conflict in the future were investigated. Over 10,000 individuals between the ages of 15 and 40, in both east and west European countries, responded to interviews lasting 2 hours. The results of the analysis carried out show: (1) low social power is related to peace agreement; (2) participants low in social power tend to be pessimistic about the future; and (3) participants low in social power tend to expect more conflict between potential conflict groups.

Keywords: assessments of social power, perception of the future, peace, conflict.

The predictor variables in this study consisted of both social and personality assessments, but had in common that they all were indirect assessments of social power. The five predictors employed were *relative social position, activity, alienation, knowledge, and dogmatism*.

A peripheral position in society is a position of powerlessness. Such an "underdog" will be absent from the central decision-making processes and its supporting communication structure (Galtung, 1964). Homans (1950) suggested a positive relationship between social activity and power, and Seeman (1959) suggested that one dimension of alienation is a personal sense of powerlessness. Knowledge and information are related to bases of power according to Raven (1965), and dogmatism (Rokeach, 1960) has been related to low self-esteem and feelings of powerlessness (Larsen, 1969). The foregoing suggests that a peripheral position, low social activity, alienation, low knowledge, and high dogmatism are consistently related to low social power.

The conclusions drawn in the study are based on nearly 10,000 interviews made in Czechoslovakia, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and Yugoslavia. The respondents ranged in age from 15 to 40, and thus all had a considerable future to look forward to. Each interview took about two hours and respondents were polled from broad cross sections of society in each nation in the attempt to obtain representative samples. A major concern of the study was to ascertain the relationship between the aforementioned predictor variables and (a) agreement with a set of peace proposals; (b) people's views of their own life, the condition of their country and the world past, present, and future, to the year 2000 (Cantril, 1965); and (c) expectation of conflict in the future.

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PEACE PROPOSALS AND INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

The peace proposals and five indexes were intercorrelated using the Pearson product moment correlation index. All five indices related to peace agreement. Dogmatism was the best predictor (number of significant relationships in several countries ranged from 16 to 19). In other words, there were from 16 to 19 significant correlations out of 25 possible between peace agreement and dogmatism. For social position the range was 8 to 10, for social activity 6 to 10, for knowledge 7 to 16, and for alienation 2 to 7. The type of person who is likely to agree with peace proposals, regardless of type, then, *tends to be high in dogmatism, low in activity, low in knowledge, high in alienation, and belong to the periphery of society*. The results suggest that readiness to acquiesce might be partially attributed to the low power position of those individuals. If this is the most logical explanation, there is probably little relationship between peace proposal agreement and peace action for these individuals.

THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Individuals who are high on personal and social power are likely to be optimistic. The results of one-way analysis of variance between high, medium, and low groups on the predictor variables analyzing for differences on the Cantril scale support this. Respondents high in activity, knowledge, low in alienation, and belonging to the center tend to be more optimistic about their own life and the conditions of their country and the world. The results for dogmatism are more complex. Low dogmatic participants are more optimistic about the past, present and future for the individual's own life; whereas high dogmatic participants are more optimistic about conditions of country and the world. Any conclusions drawn from this must be moderated by the following factors: (1) There was a total of 60 significant F values possible for each predictor; (2) The number of significant F values was for dogmatism 21, activity 16, knowledge 20, alienation 38, and social position 28; (3) The number of reversals of prediction ranged from 3 to 12; (4) The reversals were largely due to non-linearity of the data.

EXPECTATION OF CONFLICT

One of the crucial questions facing mankind between now and the year 2000 is the possibility of war, or, at the other end of the spectrum, total disarmament. One-way analysis of variance between high, middle, and low groups on the predictor variables for the world situation in five years, 20 years, and by the year 2000 was carried out for the six countries. The results tended to show that central, active, knowledgeable and low dogmatic persons are, on the whole, more optimistic with regard to disarmament in the future. Out of 18 possible significant F values, dogmatism showed 10, activity 10, knowledge 10, alienation 7, and social position 7. Nineteen of these significant relationships were, however, non-linear or reversed relationships. The trend,

however, is apparent and the number of significant relationships far beyond chance level. The results are readily explained by analyzing social power as an intervening variable between social and personality characteristics of the participant and the participant's response to questions dealing with peace proposals, optimism-pessimism, and expectations of conflict. Individuals low in social and personal power would be more likely to acquiesce to peace proposals all of which were high in social desirability. At the same time they are likely to be more pessimistic regarding their own lives and the condition of their country and the world. Since they possess little power to actively intervene in the future, they may also be more pessimistic and expect more conflict in the future. The results of this large-scale survey tend to support the above propositions.

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