

## CONTEMPORARY CONCEPTS OF POWER AND ADLER'S VIEWS

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One of Adler's most basic concepts is "striving for success." In one of his last papers he referred to the striving toward a subjectively conceived goal of success as being inherent in the "very structure of life" (1).

As Ansbacher (3) points out, however, Adler first conceived of striving for success as a compensation for feelings of inferiority. This deficiency basis of motivation was eventually replaced by a growth basis of motivation, with success-striving as the central motive. Inferiority feelings were now seen as concomitant with the frustration of not being able to achieve an ideal state of perfection.

Adler's use of the term power was within the context of striving for success. In his earlier conceptualization the "will to power," for which he credited Nietzsche, was a compensatory striving for feelings of powerlessness or inferiority. More specifically, power was equated with masculinity, and although the striving for masculinity as power, the masculine protest, was thought to be more pronounced in women, it was to be found in all individuals as a response to feelings of inferiority. In Adler's later interpretation of success striving, power was viewed as personal power and a goal for individuals who had an underdeveloped disposition of social interest.

Ansbacher (4) clarifies Adler's final theory by pointing out that striving for perfection, growth, or success initially represents "ethically neutral dynamics." Ethical aspects are introduced by one's conception of success as this is reflected in one's actual or inferred goal of success and manifested by the consequences of striving. According to Adler: "The striving of each actively moving individual is towards overcoming, not towards power. Striving for power, for personal power, represents only one of a thousand types, all of which seek perfection, a security-giving plus situation" (5, p. 114). It is in mature individuals, in the sense of favorable development, that the goal is informed by social interest and is one of power over general difficulties; it is in unfavorable development that the goal is one of personal power. Attitudes of social interest and personal power reflect varying levels of development of the innate potentiality of social interest or cooperative social living. Consistent with this assumption Adler (2) believed that if personal power existed as

an ideal for an individual or for a group it could be replaced by a more mature and constructive ideal of social interest.

It is the intent of this paper to review several contemporary approaches which appear to parallel Adler's final conceptualizations regarding power and social interest, to review certain relevant research findings, and to draw some implications.

#### CONTEMPORARY CONCEPTS

White (35, 36) uses the term "competence" to refer to an individual's capacity to interact effectively with his environment. White's concept of "effectance" refers to the motivating state underlying activities in the service of competence. While effectance would seem equivalent to striving for success, competence would seem equivalent to power or success in the ethically neutral sense. White introduces another term, "efficacy," for the attitudinal dimension. Efficacy is a feeling of being active, of doing something, of having an influence on something; hence, an attitude which accompanies the satisfaction of the effectance motive or striving for success. Piaget (23) also uses the term efficacy in a similar manner. Adler's corresponding terms were: feelings of significance, strength, dominance, superiority, powerfulness, feeling worthwhile, self-esteem, and others.

Minton (20), drawing upon Bertrand Russell's (26) definition of power as the production of intended effects, and upon Heider's (13) discussion of the meaning of power, defines the concept as the ability to cause environmental change so as to obtain an intended effect. Minton makes a distinction between manifest and latent power; the former referring to objective behavioral effectiveness and influence, the latter to power as a subjective attitude of how powerful one feels and believes himself to be and how set one is to implement power at the manifest level. Latent power can therefore be conceived as varying along a dimension of powerfulness-powerlessness.

As indicated in a more complete review (20) the most direct approaches to the concept of latent power are those of Heider, Thibaut and Kelley, and Rotter. All of these approaches have been influenced by Lewin's (19) field theory. The Lewinian equivalent of power, at both the latent and manifest levels, is space of free movement. This consists of those regions within an individual's life space which are accessible to one's abilities. A general theoretical accord between Lewin and Adler is noted by Ansbacher and Ans-

bacher (5). Lefcourt (16) also indicates that Rotter credits Adler as well as Lewin as a major contributor to his theoretical position.

Heider's (13) concept of power is viewed within the context of a naive analysis of action. Power represents the non-motivational factor contributed by the person in effecting environmental change. The effectiveness of the person is a result of the combination of a motivational factor, labeled "trying," and a power factor. The outcome of a given action is a function of the effective force of the person and the effective force of the environment. Heider points out that in a naive psychology a person trying to do something is significantly different from a person having the power or ability to accomplish something. He, therefore, introduces the concept of "can" to refer to the power of the person in relation to the strength of the environmental forces.

The feeling or attitude of power that accompanies an action outcome is developed according to the causal locus attributed to the event. The locus may be attributed to the person, the environment, or a combination of the two. Thus, in an action outcome of success an attitude of powerfulness is consistent with a personal locus of causality. An attitude of powerlessness is consistent with an environmental locus of causality. In an action outcome of failure the above relationship would be reversed. Heider points out that there are several conditions which can determine the direction of causality or attribution. Personal characteristics such as ability, skill, or strength would lead to the person as the causal source; whereas, variable environmental factors such as luck or opportunity would lead to the environment as the causal source. Piaget (22) and Werner (34) theorize in a similar vein about the causal relationships the person attributes to events.

Thibaut and Kelley's (33) concept of power is also viewed as a product of the person-environment interaction. As in Heider's approach, power as an attitude is developed on the basis of the level and source of outcomes that result from performing an act. Thibaut and Kelley, however, place more emphasis on the development of expectancies for what is satisfying and unsatisfying in the level of outcomes. They introduce the concept of "comparison level" (CL) to represent a zero or neutral point on a scale of outcomes. This concept is very similar to Helson's (14) adaptation level. The CL or neutral point will shift according to the outcomes which are salient at a given time. On this basis a generalized CL is developed across

situations. Thus, an individual with a relatively consistent high CL will tend to emphasize rewards and have an attitude of optimism and powerfulness. Whereas, an individual with a relatively consistent low CL will tend to emphasize costs and have an attitude of pessimism and powerlessness.

There is an interesting relationship between Thibaut and Kelley's comparison level and Adler's fictional goal. Adler emphasized the subjective basis for each individual's goal of success. The CL refers to the subjective basis for successful or satisfying feedback.

Rotter, Seeman, and Liverant (25) define internal versus external control of reinforcement as the degree of personal responsibility accepted for a given event. Internal control represents the attribution of causality to personal factors. External control represents the attribution of causality to environmental factors. Minton (20) points out that although Rotter does not use the term power, his conceptualization of the control dimension appears to be highly consistent with the concept of power as used by Heider and Thibaut and Kelley. Seeman (27) in discussing the various meanings of alienation refers to one of these as a feeling of powerlessness which he equates with external control.

The analyses of a power or control dimension by Heider, Thibaut and Kelley, and Rotter appear to be in close agreement with one another, as well as consistent with the Adlerian view of power and social interest attitudes. Lefcourt (16) has also pointed to a similarity between Rotter's belief in personal control and Adler's striving

TABLE I. POWER-RELATED PROCESSES ACCORDING TO VARIOUS THEORIES

Theory	Motivation	Subjective Feeling	Objective Manifestation
Adler (5)	Striving for success	Feeling of significance; self-esteem	Overcoming
White (35, 36)	Effectance	Efficacy	Competence
Minton (20)		Latent power	Manifest power
Lewin (19)		Free movement	Free movement
Heider (13)	"Trying"	Feeling of power; causal locus in the person	"Can" person effect environmental change
Thibaut and Kelley (33)		Attitude of powerfulness; optimism	Environmental effectiveness
Rotter (25)		Internal control of reinforcement	Behavior leading to reinforcement

for superiority. Belief in internal control parallels the feelings of powerfulness, superiority, success, self-esteem, security, being-at-home-in-the-world, etc. Belief in external control parallels feelings of powerlessness, inferiority, failure, worthlessness, insecurity, being-as-if-in-enemy-country, etc.

A summary of this section is presented in the form of Table 1.

#### RESEARCH ON INTERNAL-EXTERNAL CONTROL

Neither Heider's nor Thibaut and Kelley's approach to latent power has led to direct empirical test. However, Rotter's analysis of a parallel concept of internal-external control has led to considerable empirical investigation (17, 20, 24). The most commonly used measure of consistent attitudes of internal-external control is the Internal-External Control (I-E) Scale. This consists of 23 forced-choice items in the form of expectancies rather than behavioral preferences, and scored in the direction of external control.

Lefcourt (16) in a brief overview of the research findings relevant to the control dimension points out that there have been two major approaches. One deals with situation-specific expectancies usually based on task orientation. The other focuses on generalized expectancies. Regarding the former Lefcourt writes:

Generally speaking, when given tasks are described to Ss as requiring skill, which implies that the outcomes are personally controllable, Ss are found to behave in a more adaptive, achievant fashion than when the task is described as requiring luck or some other external factors. When Ss believe that tasks demand skill, they make predictions about future successes more on the basis of previous experience than when they believe that the tasks are externally controlled . . . When people believe that a given success is related to a given behavior on their part they perform and make estimates of their performance more adequately in that situation, than otherwise; there is more self-monitoring or evaluation (16, p. 186-187).

Regarding generalized expectancies as measured by the I-E Scale comparative group findings indicate that Negroes and lower class individuals generally score more externally than whites and middle class individuals (6, 18, 32). These results are consistent with the theoretical expectation that individuals who are restricted by environmental barriers would develop "external" attitudes, i.e., would consider themselves more controlled by external forces. Other comparisons show that schizophrenics (10) and retardates (7) score more "externally" than groups of normal subjects.

Several investigations have supported the hypothesis that individuals who are more "internal" will demonstrate more initiative

and effort in controlling their environment. This is exemplified in findings that "internals" learn more about their environmental settings (28, 29), and are more willing to commit themselves to social action behavior (11, 31). Significant correlations (20) have been found between internal control and need for achievement.

The internally-controlled individual is actively engaged in trying to implement his intentions according to what is provided by the environmental conditions with which he is interacting. He has a feeling of powerfulness, whereas the believer in external control has a feeling of powerlessness. This dimension is paralleled by one of activeness-passiveness, respectively.

#### IMPLICATIONS

##### *Empirical Referents for Adler's Typology*

In his later writings Adler added the variable, degree of activity, to the analysis of social interest (5, pp. 163-171). A typology based on the two variables was developed. In addition, Adler introduced the concept of "courage" which referred to activity consistent with an orientation of social interest. A high degree of social interest combined with a high degree of activity represents the socially useful type. The ruling type corresponds to a low degree of social interest combined with a high degree of activity in the form of attempting to dominate others. The getting type reflecting attempts at utilizing the resources of others corresponds to low social interest and a moderate degree of activity. Low social interest and low activity is represented by the avoiding type.

The results of studies investigating the internal-external control dimension provide some empirical referents for Adler's typology. Belief in one's internal control is generally related to attempts at effecting environmental change and more specifically to social action commitment (11, 31). Thus, internal control would be characteristic of Adler's socially useful type. The ruling, getting, and avoiding types all reflect a low degree of social interest and an attitude of external control. Distinctions among these three types are on the basis of the degree of activity. Empirical referents for this distinction are provided by Minton (20) who suggests that the dimensions of Machiavellianism and need for control are related to internal-external control. The rationale is that the need to control other people or things is a compensatory drive to reduce feelings of being externally controlled.

Machiavellianism has been measured by several forms of a scale consisting of items adapted from Machiavelli's writings (8). Individuals who score high on the Mach scale endorse items indicative of a cynical outlook, interpersonal detachment, and manipulativeness. Minton (20) hypothesized a relationship between Machiavellianism and external control. This was empirically supported by a significant correlation of .38 ( $p < .01$ ) for a sample of 54 Peace Corps trainees.<sup>1</sup> However, Minton suggests that there are some "externals" who tend to be Machiavellian, i.e., engage in disguised ways of manipulating others, some who overtly tend to express a desire for control, and some whose attitudes are primarily passive regarding any wish to manipulate others.

Adler's three categories reflecting low social interest appear to be analogous to the above trichotomy. Machiavellianism would seem to correspond most closely with the getting type; need for controlling others, with the ruling type; and passivity, with the avoiding type. Neither Adler nor Minton consider these as discrete typologies but as conceptual schematizations.

In summary, there is empirical support for Adler's socially useful type in terms of the relationship between an attitude of internal control and an action mode of pro-social behavior. General empirical support is found for Adler's low social interest types in terms of the inverse relationship between external control and pro-social behavior. Minimal empirical support exists concerning the positive relationship between specific asocial and antisocial action modes and external control. However, some suggestion of such a relationship comes from analyses of actual social situations as well as from a theoretical context. An example of the former would be the Negro American's attempts at reducing the pervasive feeling of powerlessness that has been continually reinforced by objective conditions (9, 21, 30).

### *Personality Change and Social Interest*

The integration of contemporary and Adlerian theorizing about power leads to implications for the dynamics of change. A major goal in Adlerian psychotherapy is to activate social interest in the patient and bring it to a stage of adequate development (5, pp. 340-343). Since courage represents activity plus social interest, this process of activating social interest is referred to as encouragement.

<sup>1</sup>ROBERT E. LEE III, personal communication, April, 1967.

In contrast, a barrier to the development of social interest would represent a situation of discouragement. As Lefcourt (16) points out, encouragement as a therapeutic process would often involve the creation of an internal-control situation for the discouraged or externally-controlled patient.

Harvey, Hunt, and Schroder (12) in their recent theory of the levels of conceptual development, consistent with Piaget (22) and Werner (34), hypothesized a progression from external to internal causality with increasing conceptual differentiation and integration. More specifically, internal control would be consistent with conceptual flexibility, while external control would be consistent with conceptual rigidity. A generalized power expectancy or feeling of internal-external control is developed on the basis of the kinds of training conditions one has been exposed to. An individual who has been continually exposed to training agents of complete or nearly complete control, tends to develop an orientation of external causality. In contrast, the highly conceptually developed individual is one who has been exposed to training conditions which emphasize rewards for exploration and initiative, and so develops an orientation of internal causality. In Adlerian terms, one's generalized feeling of internal-external causality would reflect how much encouragement one has received across training situations.

Hunt and Hardt (15) in an assessment of summer Upward Bound programs found a general change toward greater internal control. However, the greatest changes in internal control occurred in programs that had environments closely matching the conceptual levels of the students, i.e., a structured environment for low conceptual level students, and a flexible environment for high conceptual students. This study represents the only *field* investigation of methods for changing an external-control attitude. Some *laboratory* studies of attempts to change external-control related behavior are reported by Lefcourt (16).

Investigations of the environmental conditions which might be conducive to developing greater feelings of internal control or power should provide a better understanding of how social action or pro-social behavior can be developed as a replacement for asocial and antisocial behavior.

In conclusion, such investigations are concerned with more explicit dimensions of the processes of personality development to which Adler referred more vaguely. In the application of these

theories to personality change, there is a striking similarity between the goal of achieving greater internal control as a result of summer Upward Bound programs in the 1960's, and Adler's attempts in the 1930's of introducing experimental schools for the purpose of creating an environment conducive to the development of social interest.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The approaches of White, Minton, Lewin, Heider, Thibaut and Kelley, and Rotter to the concept of power were considered in comparison with Adler's concept. Three lines of research reviewed, using the Internal-External Control Scale as a measure of a feeling of power, permit the following conclusions:

1. When people believe they are personally responsible for the results of their actions, they manifest more activeness and effectiveness in general than when they consider themselves powerless.
2. Adler's ruling, getting, and avoiding types appear to reflect a low degree of social interest and an attitude of external control.
3. One's generalized feeling of internal-external causality (control) is related to encouragement received. There are indications that pro-social behavior can be developed to the extent that feelings of internal control or causality can be instilled.

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