

>>> **IFC2015**

**International Fundraising Congress | Resource Alliance**

*(Turning into a masterclass for IFC 2016)*

The implications for rethinking strategy

**POWER. Yours...Mine...Ours...Theirs...**

**Why power matters. Which power matters.**

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Talking about power is mostly an exploration of meaning and experiences. Probably not many action steps.

Prepare for wandering conversations, errant thoughts, possibly uncomfortable points challenging your thinking and mine. And, occasionally, maybe creating some answers together.

Power... It's all around us, everywhere.

Sometimes power is transparent and apparent. Other times, power is subtle, even hidden.

But power pretty much always matters. Just ask the powerful and the powerless.

Join this candid conversation about power: How you cope with power now. How to talk about power with others. How to take advantage of power to rethink strategy and make change.

And finally, how you and I can be good power brokers ... not the other kind.

Topics for our conversation

- Understanding the link between privilege and power.
- Developing your comfort and understanding about how to explore and apply power with your boss, board, donors, program colleagues, other NGOs.
- Outlining strategies to empower others.
- Recognizing the potential for philanthropy to be a democratizing activity.
- Owning and using your own power well.
- Recognizing and managing power.

# Thoughts. Ideas. Questions. Conversation.



**Power...** That thing we mostly don't talk about in polite company. But we (and they) sure use it!

**Individual power:** Yours. Your boss. Board chair. Donor.

**Group power:** Your board. Program staff versus fundraising and admin staff.

**By virtue of position.**

**By virtue of privilege** – earned or unearned.

**Building power**

**Sharing power**


**Shifting power**

**We exert our power... And then we are appalled by it.**

# Defining and exploring power [Comments from Wikipedia]

“In social science and politics, power is the ability to influence or control the behavior of people...[T]he exercise of power is accepted as endemic to humans as social beings.”<sup>1</sup>

Power as a means to make social actions possible – or to constrain or prevent actions. Power, as described by philosopher Michel Foucault, is a structural expression of a “complex strategic situation in a given social setting”<sup>2</sup> that requires both constraint and enablement.



Particularly helpful

**5 bases of power** (Social psychologists J. R. P. French and B. Raven, “The Bases of Social Power,” *Studies in Social Power*, ed. D. Cartwright, University of Michigan Press, 1959.)<sup>3</sup>

## 1. Legitimate (or Positional) Power

Delegated to an individual due to position within an organization.

## 2. Referent power

Power or ability of individuals to attract others and build loyalty. Based on the charisma and interpersonal skills of the power holder, thus creating the opportunity for interpersonal influence.

Unfortunately, abuse is possible when the power holder lacks integrity and honesty, and gains personal advantage at the cost of the group’s position.

Referent power is unstable alone. And is insufficient for a leader who seeks respect and longevity.

## 3. Expert power

The individual’s power derives from his/her skills or expertise – and those are needed by the organization. This power is usually highly specific and limited to the area of skills and expertise.

Expert power allows the individual to understand a situation, suggest solutions, apply judgment, and usually outperform others. Others tend to trust and respect what you say. Others look to those with expert power for leadership in the particular arena(s).

## 4. Reward power

The power wielder can confer valued material rewards on others. The problem: You may not have lots of control over rewards. And when the power person uses up her/his available rewards – or the rewards aren’t perceived as sufficiently valuable – power weakens. People also can become satiated by rewards, thus effectiveness is lost.

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<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia

<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia. C. Gordon, Forward. *Power/knowledge*, M. Foucault, Pantheon Books, NY 1980.

<sup>3</sup> Wikipedia

## 5. Coercive power

Coercion means applying negative influences, including withholding rewards, denying privileges, and assigning undesirable tasks. Coercive power tends to be the least effective power due to the resulting fear, resentment, and resistance of threats and punishment.

Coercive power is rarely appropriate in an organization setting. Reliance on this power results in a very cold and impoverished leadership style.

Very interesting.

[All of this is thanks to Wikipedia.]

### Power Principles in Interpersonal Relationships (L.K. Buerrero and P.A. Andersen.

Close encounters: Communication in Relationships. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2011.)<sup>4</sup>

1. Power as a Perception
2. Power as a Relationship Concept
3. Power as Resource Based
4. The Principle of Least Interest and Dependence Power
5. Power as Enabling or Disabling
6. Power as Prerogative

### Political theory from Tarnow

Power over an individual can be amplified by the group. The leader's power is greatly enhanced if the group confirms to the leader's commands.

[Military. Terrorists. Cults. Etc.]

### Unmarked categories originated in feminism

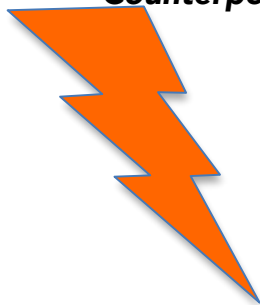
This theory analyzes the **culture of the powerful**... The people in society with easy access to resources. People who can exercise power without considering their actions.

*For the powerful, their culture is obvious.*

*For the powerless, this culture is out of reach, elite, and expensive.*

The unmarked category becomes the standard against which to measure everything else. For example, in the West... White. Male. Heterosexual. Able bodied.

### Counterpower



Countervailing force utilized by the oppressed to counterbalance or erode the power of elites.

“A collection of social institutions set in opposition to the state and capital: from self-governing communities to radical labor unions to popular militias.” (David Graeber, anthropologist)

“**Power** abdicates only under the stress of counterpower.” (Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia*, 1949)

“**Power** concedes nothing with a demand. It never did and it never will.” (Frederick Douglass, 1817 – 1895)

<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia

## Rethinking strategy by using power...well...

1. Understanding and wielding power: The implications for rethinking strategy.
2. Defining power in the context of society, work, the NGO sector, the other sectors...
3. To what degree does power – and applying it – matter?
4. The nature of power: It's personality. Actions. Behaviors.
5. Power fights... Or good fights about important issues...
6. How do we get this on the table – in the room – in our organizations?

## Rethinking strategy by using power...redux...

1. Silence is consent. So speak out.
2. Willing and able to risk.
3. Learning organization business theory.
4. Using conversation rather than discussion.
5. Being transparent.
6. Consensus in the Junior League sense
7. Developing and empowering others.

How do you talk  
about power in  
you're your NGO,  
in your work?

## Questions to explore...

1. How do effective leaders effectively use power? Individuals, boards, organizations...
2. To what degree – in what ways – is there good and bad power? How do we distinguish? Who decides?
3. What does it mean to be powerful – or powerless?
  - a. What does it mean to empower one's self? Or to empower someone else?
  - b. How do you own your own power – and apply it well / effectively – without disempowering others.
4. How do we lose power? As an individual, organization, society, etc.
5. What is the relationship between (unearned) privilege and power? (Philanthropy's moral dilemma: Unearned privilege > power)
6. To what degree – in what ways – might we use philanthropy as a democratizing power?
  - a. A useful strategy or merely a state of being.
  - b. Equity. Not equality.
7. To what degree – in what ways – might we use power as a subversive activity?
  - a. Making change.
  - b. Empowering people.
  - c. Empowering philanthropy as a democratizing act.
  - d. The power of public policy and advocacy...activism
8. What produces power?
  - a. How does an individual or an organization gain power?  
How does an individual or an organization lose power?
  - b. How do we (individual or organization) develop power?
  - c. Balancing the power of various individuals, groups, situations.

What are the power  
dynamics in your NGO?

## Questions about privilege and power

Do these questions have meaning for you personally or professionally? How might you use them?

1. How do the politics of philanthropy affect professionals? How do the politics of power affect careers and a sense of vocation in this work?
2. What is power? Why does it matter?
3. How does power affect organizations, communications, and relationships?
4. How are privilege, power, and politics linked amongst themselves? How are they linked to philanthropy, fund development, and governance? How do privilege and power affect organizational dynamics, fund development, and governance?
5. How do privilege and power affect civil society and civic capacity?
6. What is the nature of power when we discuss diversity and inclusion?
7. How is power important or not?
8. What are the implications of not having power?
9. How do power / power dynamics affect others? How does power affect process and conversation and decision-making?
10. Why do people want power?
11. What are the different kinds of privilege and power?
12. What is the language of power and how does language include or exclude people?
13. What is the “currency” of power, e.g., money and what else? How is power measured?
14. What is the relationship between power and control, and power, authority and accountability?
15. What is the nature of responsibility from those holding power to those without power?
16. What is the responsibility of the individual or group to take power / become empowered?
17. How is power acquired? How do we create power? How do we share power? How do we give away power?
18. How could / should philanthropy serve as an empowering tool?
19. To what extent do professionals have an obligation to ask these questions and encourage this kind of conversation? Why and why not?

20. What is the connection between power and the impact an organization has in its community?
21. What is the nature of your own personal privilege and advantage? How does this affect your life experience and the way you interact with others?
22. How have you been taught and socialized to remain oblivious or aware of your privilege?
23. How can each of us better perceive / acknowledge our own privilege? How can we use this awareness?
24. How do you hold yourself accountable to manage your privilege and avoid disempowering others? How do you lessen the affect of your own privilege on others?
25. How do life experiences factor into the need to achieve or repel power?
26. How does the social / cultural context empower or disempower people?
27. Why do people seek control? What is their motivation?
28. How do leaders create safety so a group can honestly discuss privilege and power?
29. What does your organization mean by diversity? How will diversity affect your organization?
30. What is the relationship between leadership and power?
31. How familiar are you with traditional philanthropy and social change / progressive philanthropy? Is traditional philanthropy enough to create a civil society and civic capacity?
32. How does the history of philanthropy and the body of knowledge reflect traditional philanthropy and exclude social change / progressive philanthropy? Why is social change / progressive philanthropy the poor and often forgotten stepchild in our communities and in our nations?
33. How do professional associations reinforce the status quo or facilitate dialogue about social change? Why does this matter or not?
34. What level of risk are you able to take when it comes to asking any cage-rattling questions, especially questions about privilege and power. (And remember, ability to take risk often depends upon a person's privilege.)
35. How might your organization "live its life differently" if it happened "in public." For example, if the media examined your fund development and governance procedures; if donors of varying amounts examined your relationship building, etc.

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